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3 to 5 infants are detected with hearing loss each year. PAGE 3

OPINION METER

This week's poll:
With Saipan casinos back on the table, how should the issue be decided: By voters acting on a legislative initiative or by lawmakers acting on a bill?

Let your voice be heard! Go to www.saipantribune.com to cast your vote.

INSIDE

Diabetes Forum
About 150 residents attend the 2nd CNMI-Wide Diabetes Health Community Forum.

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Andrew's Woes
Britain's royal family finds itself fighting an inconvenient distraction.

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CNMI scores a low 1.84 in Performeter

» Second to lowest among nine islands studied

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

While another federally funded study confirmed what everyone already knows—that the CNMI's state of fiscal affairs is not in good shape—it reveals a dangerously low overall score of 1.84 on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 as the most favorable.

This was mainly because of the fiscal year 2009 deficit of $282 million, equivalent to 122.5 percent of annual total revenue, according to the latest Performeter analysis that the U.S. Department of the Interior funded.

A significant part or $235 million of the deficit is related to pension and other employee benefit plan liabilities.

If it's any consolation, the CNMI did not get the lowest score—that would be Guam—but it still ranked second to the lowest among nine U.S.-affiliated island territories that were also analyzed.

Guam's score was the lowest at 1.30 in fiscal year 2009.

The 1.84 is the lowest score the CNMI has received since at least 2002 from the Performeter analysis that Crawford & Associates conducted for the Interior to measure the fiscal performance of island governments in 2009.

The Performeter reading is a barometer of the CNMI's financial health and performance, but should not be used as

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SAVING LIVES
American Red Cross-NMI Chapter instructor Bill Camacho, left, shows the proper palm position when doing chest compression on an unconscious individual, while students try to put what they learned into practice during the Super CPR training at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe on Saturday. The life-saving skills training is part of the activities in observance of the American Red Cross Month, to be capped by the signature 25th Annual Red Cross Walkathon on April 9 on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

HAIDEE V. EUGENIO

'Let Saipan voters decide—again—on casino'

Benavente

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

House minority leader Diego Benavente (R-Saipan) said yesterday that Saipan voters should again be the ones to decide whether casino gambling on Saipan should be legalized, instead of having lawmakers try to pass another casino bill.

Saipan voters twice rejected legalizing casino operation on Saipan. Tinian and Rota voters have already approved legalizing casinos on their islands.

South Korean and Hong Kong investors have approached lawmakers in recent days and weeks to express their interest in putting up casino operations on Saipan, with investments of anywhere between $5 million and $300 million.

"It's a major decision that Saipan

See CASINO on Page 4

'Delayed checks may force SHEFA scholars to quit'

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

Some scholars of the Saipan Higher Educational Financial Assistance are thinking of dropping some units and may altogether stop going to college if the delay in the issuance of scholarship checks continues.

SHEFA administrator Henry Hofschneider told *Saipan Tribune* yesterday that his office has been getting several calls from spring 2011 scholars who have expressed frustration about the continued delay in the issuance of their checks.

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Local

FBI, DOI probe supply of reverse osmosis units to CHC

» Supplier's sales rep allegedly forged certification for medical use

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

The Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.S. Interior Department's Office of Inspector General are jointly investigating a Calif.-based company that supplied the Commonwealth Health Center its reverse osmosis water purification system for the new hemodialysis facility.

The investigation has already led to the filing of wire fraud charges against a sales representative for Severn Trent Services, a Torrance, Calif.-based company.

The complaint against Jesse Chung Wu was filed Friday afternoon in the U.S. District Court for the NMI.

According to FBI special agent Haejun Park, Wu forged a document stating that the reverse osmosis unit was certified for medical use when in fact it was not. Wu allegedly earned a commission of $2,100 in the sale of the unit.

Alicia A.G. Limtiaco, U.S. Attorney for the Districts of Guam and the NMI, said in a statement yesterday: "The Department of Justice is committed to combating against fraudulent schemes that endanger the health and safety of our island residents."

"Federal laws and regulations are in place to protect the island community against fraud and abuse, and to ensure that essential health and human services are provided especially to those most in need," Limtiaco said.

In special agent Park's affidavit submitted to court, prime contractor AIC Marianas Inc., which won the contract to build the hemodialysis building, had subcontracted a portion of the work—which included the furnishing of two reverse osmosis units—to Saipan Ice & Water Co. Inc. Park said that Saipan Ice procured the two units from STS through Wu.

One of the reverse osmosis units, Park said, was to be used as the first pass in purifying water for use at CHC. The other unit was to be used as the second pass in purifying the water for use in the hemodialysis process.

Park said this second pass unit was required to be listed as an approved medical device meeting Food and Drug Administration standards called 510(K).

Park said their investigation showed that the reverse osmosis units supplied by Wu did not meet such standards, and that Wu knew that at least one of the units was required to meet such standards.

He said Wu represented to AIC and Saipan Ice that at least one of the units met such standards.

Park said that on March 8, 2006, Wu faxed from his home in Alhambra, California, to Saipan Ice and/or AIC a letter in which he certified that the reverse osmosis unit met such standards.

According to STS Management, however, STS has never manufactured reverse osmosis units that have the FDA 510(K) listing or certification, Park said.

Moreover, citing a professional in the field of construction of health care facilities, use of a non-FDA 510(K) reverse osmosis unit in dialysis treatment could have subjected the dialysis physicians to liability, he said.

Park said the use of the reverse osmosis unit would have put patients at risk and subjected CHC to liability.

Park said a former comptroller at Saipan Ice had advised Wu of the requirement that the reverse osmosis unit be FDA 510(K) certified.

The controller, Park said, recalled that sometime between 2004 and 2006, he asked for a certification of the FDA 510(K) compliance from Wu and later received it via either fax or email.

In an interview with Wu on July 9, 2009, at his residence in Alhambra, Park said that Wu admitted preparing the certification letter and knowing that it wasn't true.

Wu also indicated that he may have sent another version of this letter via fax or email to Saipan Ice on a date that he could not recall.

The opening of CHC's Hemodialysis Center is being delayed reportedly due to the lack of Medicare certification. In order to participate in the Medicare program, the water treatment system, including the reverse osmosis system, must meet FDA 510(K) certification.

NEW GRANT FUNDS
Assistant Secretary for Insular Affairs Anthony Babauta congratulates Gov. Benigno R. Fitial as Office of Insular Affairs Director Nik Pula announces some $411,000 in grant funds for the CNMI at the recently concluded IGIA meeting. A total of $306,000 will go to the Brown Tree Snake Control Program while $105,260 will fund the Office of the Public Auditor's training programs.
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Fitial now on medical leave for spinal surgery

Gov. Benigno R. Fitial is now on medical leave and is expected to have another spinal surgery at the UCLA Medical Center in Los Angeles, California.

Press secretary Angel Demapan said yesterday that Fitial left Washington, D.C. on the night of March 1 and arrived in Los Angeles on the morning of March 2.

While in D.C., Fitial held several meetings with federal officials and their representatives, and attended the National Governors Association winter meeting from Feb. 26 to 28.

Demapan, who accompanied the governor to the nation's capital, said Fitial is still expected to undergo surgery based on his initial consultation with his physician.

"It is still too early to tell how long he will remain on medical status. We anticipate to know more following the surgery," he told *Saipan Tribune.*

In his absence, Lt. Gov. Eloy S. Inos is the acting governor.

Inos said he wishes for Fitial's speedy recovery after his surgery.

In 2006, Fitial was away on medical leave for almost three months, from October to December, because of surgeries.

He had neck surgery on Oct. 31, 2006 (Saipan time) at the UCLA Medical Center to correct his spinal stenosis, a narrowing of the spinal canal that places pressure on the spinal cord.

Two months later, on Dec. 5, 2006, he had another surgery to address a similar condition affecting his lower back. ***(Haidee V. Eugenio)***

Teen, ex-girlfriend arrested for fighting inside car

A teenager and his former girlfriend accused each other of starting a fight that turned physical inside a vehicle in Kagman. That fight led to their arrest Friday morning.

Hierszan Martinez, 19, was arrested for assault and battery, and disturbing the peace. Gwenavere DLG. Emiliano, 21, was apprehended for assault and battery, disturbing the peace, and criminal mischief.

At yesterday's hearing, Superior Court associate judge Ramona V. Manglona released Martinez on his own cognizance, but ordered him to appear in court yesterday afternoon for his failure to appear at a hearing related to a traffic case.

Manglona released Emiliano on an unsecured bond.

Assistant public defender Michael Brown was appointed to represent Martinez, while a private counsel will be tapped to represent Emiliano.

Chief prosecutor Michael Ernest appeared for the government at the hearing.

Detective Catherine Pangelinan stated in her report that a patrol officer had gone to the Fire Station in Kagman III Friday morning in response to a call. That's where he met Emiliano, whose right ear was bleeding. She refused treatment, however.

Pangelinan said that, according to Emiliano, her former boyfriend, Martinez, punched her head during an argument while aboard his car.

Emiliano then took a USB flash drive that was in the car stereo and threw it out the window. Martinez stopped the vehicle and allegedly started punching her in the face and head.

Martinez, however, filed a counter complaint against Emiliano, Pangelinan said.

According to Martinez, Emiliano asked him to skip school and when he refused, she threw out of the car's window the USB flash drive that belongs to his mother.

Emiliano also allegedly grabbed the steering wheel while they were going down Kagman Road. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

A weekly update from the Marianas Visitors Authority
Tourism is everybody's business.

Triathlete.com Names XTERRA Saipan Championship Among Top 23 Races

Triathlete.com magazine has named this Saturday's (March 12) Saipan XTERRA Championship as one of the top 23 races in 2011 for triathlete types.

Saipan XTERRA joins the ranks of Ironman World Championship 70.3 in Las Vegas, NV and XTERRA Sardinia in Italy and other prestigious and unique runs on the list. The race is described as ideal for the "intrepid traveler" in the March 2011 edition of the magazine:

"On a tiny island (46.5 square miles) on the far side of the globe lies Xterra's 'crown jewel' course in Saipan. The race starts on the same beach where Marines attacked during 1944's Battle of Saipan. The bike course traverses nearly every inch of rugged island terrain, peaking on top of Mount Tapotchau (elevation 1,545 feet). A 12K trail run takes competitors through thick jungle, past World War II relics and into secret caves."

The list was compiled by Triathlete.com through reader surveys, advice from industry insiders, queries sent to a pack of professionals and assessment of the magazine's own race experiences.

Race organizers are encouraging community members to help build on the success of this weekend's XTERRA Saipan Championship by yielding to runners and bikers on the road and leashing their pets on Saturday morning.

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This Tourism Tuesday space is provided by Saipan Tribune

3 to 5 infants are detected with hearing loss each year

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

Three to five infants are detected with hearing loss in the CNMI every year even as the Department of Public Health reached a milestone in 2010 with the screening of its 10,000th infant—eight years after being established in 2002.

The three to five infants with hearing loss each year is based on average birth rate calculations in the Commonwealth, which was around 1,400 births in 2002 before decreasing to about 1,100 births in 2010.

According to Margarita T. Aldan, DPH maternal and child health program coordinator, the goal of the universal hearing screening program is for 100 percent of all newborns to be screened a month after birth.

"The CNMI has been consistently screening 98 percent of all infants and identifies around three to five infants with hearing loss each year. All infants with a confirmed hearing loss are eligible for early intervention services and, if the family elects, will be fitted with appropriate amplification," she told *Saipan Tribune*.

The Early Hearing Detection and Intervention program is an initiative aimed at lowering the age of identification of hearing loss in children. All babies get their hearing tested shortly after birth.

Audiologist Dr. Angie Mister advises parents to check the back of each child's yellow immunization card for the hearing screening results. If it is incomplete or if the child obtained a "refer" result, parents should call the EHDI program to schedule a follow-up appointment.

"If you suspect a hearing loss in any child, at any age, refer them for a hearing test," said Mister.

The program is funded by federal monies amounting to $140,000 each year. Initial grants were used to buy the testing equipment and supplies in the early implementation years.

"Funds have been used to upgrade equipment as well as purchase additional supplies, provide trainings, host family support events for families with children identified with hearing loss, as well as print educational materials and advertisement," said Mister.

She said the degree of hearing loss can range from mild to profound.

Mister said hearing loss can affect a child's ability to develop speech, language, and social skills. The earlier children with hearing loss are identified and start receiving services, the more likely they are to reach their full potential.

Early intervention helps young children with hearing loss learn language skills and other important skills. Research shows that early intervention services can greatly improve a child's development.

All infants are screened using a physiologic measure before one month of age. Infants who do not pass the initial screening and subsequent re-screening should have audiologic and medical evaluations to confirm hearing loss before three months of age. All infants with confirmed permanent hearing loss should receive intervention services before six months of age.

The CNMI Early Intervention Program is a collaboration between the CNMI Public School System and the Department of Public Health. For further information call Newborn Hearing Screening Program at 236-8709.

Unreleased rebate, refund checks could be because of deficiencies

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

If by today you still haven't received your 2009 tax rebate or refund check, it could be a result of filing deficiency that needs to be corrected immediately.

Acting governor Eloy S. Inos said taxpayers who have not received their refund or rebates yet could inquire with the Department of Finance's Revenue and Taxation Division.

He said only a small percentage of taxpayers have not yet gotten their 2009 rebate/refund.

"So if they haven't received it yet, there's probably something wrong and just needs to be fixed. If they feel like they have to go to Revenue and Tax, then they could do so. Those folks also can't just sit and wait and do nothing," he said.

Taxpayers will again start filing their 2010 tax returns starting on April 15.

No data is available yet as to how much in 2009 rebate or refund checks have yet to be released and those that were already released since last year.

Inos said when the Fitial administration came aboard in 2006, there was no sufficient money in the rebate trust account. He said the Fitial administration tried to build a reserve, that's why it's been able to issue rebate and refund checks on time.

"We were fortunate to have significant cover over process, so we reserved a big chunk of that. That's how we're able to pay those rebates," he said.

One of the taxpayers who have yet to receive his 2009 rebate said he has been visiting Rev&Tax, only to be told to come back again.

Another taxpayer from Navy Hill, whose husband has yet to get his 2009 refund, said yesterday that when they inquired with Rev&Tax, there was no deficiency noted in the tax filing.

She said it could be that Finance is holding on to the remaining checks until taxpayers inquire about them.

A refund is for tax that has been overpaid or incorrectly paid, and is returned to the taxpayer. It is different from the rebate, which is for tax properly paid and is subsequently returned to the taxpayer under a rebate provision.

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Admin touts increased CIP expenditure rate

In a letter dated Feb. 24, 2011, Gov. Benigno R. Fitial informed Delegate Gregorio Kilili Sablan that the local government has achieved significant progress in the implementation of Section 702 capital improvement programs. Moreover, the governor noted that current spending levels are far greater than what Sablan is saying in recent statements to the media.

Despite having to meet stringent federal requirements that require CIP projects to undergo three different steps—environmental review, design, and then construction—the Fitial administration continues to see much needed progress in moving these projects forward.

"As you are aware, in order to expedite implementation of CIP programs I assigned additional resources to this task, I am pleased to report that in the past 14 months, 44 projects have been brought under contract for implementation and we project an expenditure level of $11,235,541 for 2011, which represents 112 percent expenditure of the annual allocation in just the 44 projects being administered by this agency," Fitial stated in his letter.

Furthermore, the governor indicated that CIP expenditure levels are poised to see an even greater increase in 2012 as many of the three-pronged projects will begin the third and final phase—the construction work.

Fitial informed Sablan that, "In 2012, as we move into the construction phase of these projects we project an expenditure level of $19,226,202, which represents an expenditure rate of 202 percent of annual allocation. In total, the current CIP program has established the most aggressive 702 CIP implementation program in the history of the Commonwealth."

In an effort to clear up any misconceptions in the performance of the CIP Office, Fitial provided Sablan with information that would be helpful in understanding how the program works. "During this three-year implementation period, a large portion of project funds sit dormant as the most costly element, construction or procurement, occurs in the final year. This multi-year implementation plan is illustrated by landfill projects on the islands of Tinian and Rota where the total project cost is approximately $6 million; however, expenditures in the first two years associated with environmental review and design are less than $1.5 million," Fitial pointed out.

The administration and the Legislature have both requested the assistance of Sablan's office to work with the local government to address the current fiscal challenges. Although it has yet to receive a response from Sablan's office, the Executive Branch remains hopeful that Sablan will soon join the local leadership in its efforts to improve the quality of life for the people of the Commonwealth. ***(Office of the Governor)***

Ex-convict blames friends, family for inability to stay away from 'ice'

The U.S. Probation Office yesterday asked the federal court to revoke the probation of an ex-convict who allegedly admitted to using "ice" during his supervised release.

Steven Faisao Abal was ordered to appear in court to explain why his supervised release should not be revoked.

Abal was sentenced in October 2005 to 20 months in prison and five years of supervised release for conspiracy to distribute "ice."

On Oct. 30, 2010, Abal's supervised release was revoked for two months due to multiple positive drug tests. On Nov. 17, 2010, Abal was released from custody.

U.S. Probation Officer Melinda Santos stated in her report that on Dec. 8, 2010, she and another probation officer visited Abal at his home and asked him to submit to a urinalysis test.

Santos said that Abal admitted smoking "ice" the previous day.

On Dec. 27, 2010, Santos said, Abal admitted in writing to smoking "ice" and drinking beer on Christmas Eve.

The officer said that Abal claimed he had been smoking "ice" throughout the week because he was around friends and family members who were using illegal drugs and that he could not control himself.

Santos said that Abal also admitted using the money his sister gave him to pay for a cell phone bill to buy drugs.

Santos said two drug tests conducted in February 2011 showed Abal presumptive positive for "ice."

Santos said the defendant also missed several urinalysis appointments and counseling appointments. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

EXCHANGE VISIT CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Gov. Benigno R. Fitial sits down with Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) in her office here to discuss the major challenges besetting the Northern Mariana Islands. In their meeting, Murkowski formally invited Fitial to be a guest speaker at the upcoming 2011 Renewable Energy Fair in Anchorage, Alaska, set to be held in August. Meanwhile, Murkowski accepted Fitial's invitation and announced that she plans to visit the islands next year in either February or March.

SCORES

From Page 1

the only source of financial information to evaluate the CNMI's performance and condition.

Crawford & Associates said the 2009 reading of 1.84 indicates the evaluator's opinion that the CNMI's overall financial health and performance continued to be "less than satisfactory."

Yap in the Federated States of Micronesia got the highest score in the latest Performeter at 7.89, followed by Pohnpei with 5.68; Kosrae, 5.38; American Samoa, 4.82, the Marshall Islands, 4.47; Chuuk, 4.12; and Palau, 3.45.

These eight island areas outperformed the CNMI, and most of them have much smaller economies than the CNMI and Guam.

The U.S. Virgin Islands' score was 2.89, but this was for FY 2008.

The primary contributing factors to the continued low readings are the $20 million increase in amounts due the employee benefit plans system, the current year increase in the net assets deficit, the deficit unrestricted net assets, the general fund's balance deficit, and insufficient current and quick ratios.

What this means, among other things, is that the CNMI government was not able to live within its means.

In fiscal year 2009, the CNMI funded 83.6 percent of its expenses with current year revenues, "which is less than satisfactory percentage." This is also lower than the ratio in prior years.

Rep. Edmund Villagomez (Cov-Saipan), chairman of the House Commerce and Tourism Committee, said the result was not a surprise, but to have such a very low score is an eye opener.

"Personally, we could have done better," he said.

But Villagomez said even when the CNMI had a budget of some $250 million, the overall score was already low. But then again, the annual score has gotten from worse to worst.

The CNMI had an overall score of 3.18 in 2002 and 3.11 in 2003. This went down to 2.24 and 2.25 in 2004 and 2005, respectively, before coming slightly back up to 2.44 in 2006.

From there, it continued to plunge. It went down to 2.01 in 2007, then to 1.90 in 2008, and finally, to 1.84 in 2009.

The Performeter, which Crawford & Associates developed, is an analysis that takes a government's financial statements and converts them into useful and understandable measures of financial performance.

Besides the Performeter, the document also focused on the status report of Audit Findings, Timeliness and Exception Resolution, or AFTER.

Rep. Trenton Conner (R-Tinian) said it would be interesting to find out whether the impending federal immigration control back in fiscal year 2009 had an impact on the CNMI's overall score.

"I understand the issue of mismanagement, but how about the effect of federal border control?" he asked, adding that the CNMI's lack of an economic master plan may also be one factor in its continued low score.

CHECKS

From Page 1

It is the Department of Finance that issues the checks.

Because classes for spring 2011 started in January, Hofschneider said that some scholars borrowed money for their tuition and other fees, while others signed promissory notes with their colleges and universities.

"I am worried for our scholars because they're looking now at dropping from their studies due to the delayed assistance…and I cannot blame them because some of them cannot afford to pay the tuition and other fees for the meantime. Some have already expressed their frustration with the situation because they continue to sign promissory notes with their schools," said Hofschneider.

He said this takes the attention of students away from their studies, as they worry about their finances.

The current economic hardship is also a factor in the limited financial assistance the students are getting from their families, according to him.

SHEFA has yet to submit to Finance a check request for spring 2011 scholars in the wake of a board decision not to do so until all fall 2010 scholars get their checks first.

Some 600 checks for fall 2010 scholars remain unpaid. SHEFA has been asking Finance for these checks since December but there has been no disbursement yet as of yesterday.

Hofschneider assured that SHEFA continues to follow up on these check requests, but that it has no control on when the funds will actually be disbursed. "They [Finance] said they will call us as soon as it is available for disbursement."

Because of the concerns raised by the spring scholars, SHEFA will submit this week a check request for 182 grant-in-aid scholars for spring 2011: 93 for off-island and 89 for on-island scholars.

SHEFA has so far approved the applications of 328 students this new semester, covering off-island and on-island scholars under three programs.

SHEFA is allocated $3 million yearly for its scholarship programs. It has a little over $1 million left for the spring 2011 semester.

CASINO

From Page 1

voters have to decide on, and not just lawmakers," Benavente said.

Instead of passing a pending casino bill, he said that members who want to allow casinos on Saipan should instead introduce a legislative initiative.

Better yet, focus on other tourism-related projects.

Benavente said his personal position not to support any bill legalizing casino operation on Saipan has not changed, but he said if voters approve it this time around, then he would respect that decision.

"I'm aware that the economy has gotten worse from the time voters last rejected the Saipan casino initiative and some people could argue that people will now be more open to the idea of a casino industry here. So why not allow voters to decide?" he said.

Benavente was among the six House members who voted "no" on Rep. Froilan Tenorio's (Cov-Saipan) casino bill in August. Tenorio's Saipan casino bill passed the House, only to be rejected by the Senate.

Two months later, Rep. Stanley Torres (Ind-Saipan) introduced a new casino bill, House Bill 17-130, that covers not only Saipan but also Rota and Tinian.

Rep. Trenton Conner (R-Tinian) said the House Ways and Means Committee which he is a member is also considering an initiative instead of the pending casino bill.

He said in his personal view, the current state of the economy may yet make voters change their minds about allowing casinos to operate on Saipan. He said the work hour cuts and threats of layoffs could also be among the deciding factors.

"We're in dire straits. The people of the CNMI are suffering and we as leaders should do all we can to help people. If voters want it now, we can only support their decision. But casino is not the only avenue. I just hope it's not going to kill the Tinian and Rota casino industries," he said.

There is also no telling yet whether the Ways and Means Committee would recommend passage of Torres' casino bill or offer a substitute bill.

Conner, who abstained from voting on a Saipan casino bill last year, said if the investors that have been expressing interest in investing in casinos on Saipan are also going to invest on Rota and Tinian, then their plans could get wider support.

"We have to think as one, not only about Saipan, or only Rota or only Tinian," he said.

Speaker Eli Cabrera (R-Saipan) referred Torres' HB 17-130 to the Ways and Means Committee on Feb. 25.

The committee, chaired by Rep. Ray Basa (Cov-Saipan), has 60 days from the date of the referral to submit a report on the casino bill.

"I kindly urge the committee to promptly review and take action on this referral," Cabrera told the committee in his memo.

Rep. Edmund Villagomez (Cov-Saipan), a member of the Ways and Means Committee, said they might take up the casino bill during a meeting tentatively set for Wednesday.

Alleged victim testifies vs ex-DPW official in sex assault case

The alleged victim took the witness stand yesterday in the bench trial of a former Department of Public Works official who is accused of sexually assaulting her at DPW's office.

Superior Court Associate Judge Kenneth Govendo, who presided over the bench trial of 33-year-old Joseph Inos Jr., did not allow the media inside the courtroom during the alleged victim's testimony. Govendo said the girl is a minor.

The girl's parents were the government's last two witnesses yesterday afternoon.

Assistant attorney general Shelli Neal, who prosecuted the case, said she will have three more witnesses when trial resumes today, Tuesday, at 9am.

The mother said the victim is the only child she has. "I'm still angry," the mother told the court during Neal's direct examination.

The father said it was his common-law wife who first told him on the phone about what had happened to their daughter. He said his daughter later told her parts of what had happened.

"She was uncomfortable in explaining it to me," he said.

He said the matter was first discussed with Workforce Investment Agency officials, then her daughter was brought alone to the Division of Youth Services and Department of Public Safety.

Chief public defender Adam Hardwicke and assistant public defender Adam Miles, counsel for Inos, did not cross-examine the parents.

The Office of the Attorney General has charged Inos with assault and battery, disturbing the peace, misconduct in public office, and false arrest. He has pleaded not guilty.

The OAG alleged that on Aug. 16, 2010 Inos had sexual contact with the then 17-year-old girl and that he detained her against her will. The girl was a WIA trainee at the time, while Inos was DPW's Technical Services Division director.

Inos later resigned from DPW. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Tinian lawmakers OK $64K for local scholarship

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
haidee_eugenio@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The four-member Tinian Legislative Delegation passed yesterday a local bill that will give $64,000 collected from poker machine license fees to the Tinian Municipal Scholarship Fund.

House Local Bill 17-42 passed 4-0 during a 30-minute delegation session. The measure now heads to the governor for action.

Bill author Rep. Trenton Conner (R-Tinian) said 98 Tinian students will benefit from the measure when it becomes law. This is supposed to be for the January to June semester.

Each of the 98 students will get $653.06. Conner said this is in addition to the $250 that each received previously.

"We try to provide at least $1,000 each every semester, but collection from poker machine license fee went down," Conner said.

Senate Vice President Jude Hofschneider (R-Tinian) said that licenses for five poker machines were not renewed, resulting in a loss of at least $20,000.

The license fee is $4,000 for each machine on Tinian.

Hofschneider, who chairs the delegation, said they would like to see private firms in the CNMI also donating to the Tinian and Rota scholarships, and not just Saipan.

He cited, for example, Bridge Capital LLC, which has been a generous contributor to Saipan schools, churches, groups, and organizations.

Sen. Frank Cruz (R-Tinian), during the session, raised concern that the scholarship office lost one of the scholarship applications submitted.

He said when he inquired, the scholarship office said it did not receive the application, but the student was able to support her claim that she submitted an application because it was "received" and "stamped" by the scholarship office.

Sen. Henry San Nicolas (Cov-Tinian) said this matter should be brought up to the scholarship office and board.

The delegation's passage of the $64,000 funding for the Tinian Scholarship Fund came shortly after acting governor Eloy S. Inos signed into law on Friday a local bill appropriating $52,000 from poker license fees to three programs and activities.

Parade of Books moved to April 2

The schedule for the 7th Annual Parade of Books has been moved to April 2 but it will still be held at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

Parade of Books, Rotary's annual literacy program, features schools from all over the CNMI competing for cash prizes by interpreting their favorite books via creative performances.

The annual event was originally slated for March 26.

"We moved to help accommodate another group," vocational services director Jeff Boyer told *Saipan Tribune.*

According to Boyer, a total of 11 schools have so far expressed interest to participate in the event, with six of them already signed up for the event.

Boyer disclosed that the last school to confirm its participation was Tinian Elementary School.

Cash prizes are at stake. First place winner will get $1,000; second place, $750; third place, $500; fourth place, $300; fifth place, $200; and consolation prize of $100.

Winner for the Best in Spirit Award will receive 30 Pacific Islands Club Water Park Passes and one night stay at PIC for Best Producer or Director.

Sponsors for this year's Parade of Books are Delta Air Lines, Pacific Islands Club, and the Kishiwada North Rotary Club.

For more information, contact Boyer at 323-0647 or email at j.boyer@ipehq.com. ***(Clarissa V. David)***

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SPONSORED BY THE ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTANTS, CNMI CHAPTER

When: March 11, 2011

Time: 8:30am - 5:00pm
Registration begins at 8:00am

Location: Pacific Islands Club, Charley's

Seminar Fee: $70 Per Person

Registration Deadline: March 10, 2011

To register or for more information, please contact Glenda P. Cabrera at 322-7337 ext. 237

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'Commitment is important to treat and prevent diabetes'

By CLARISSA V. DAVID
clarissa_david@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A retired nurse with over 20 years of hospital service under her belt highlighted the importance of being committed in the treatment and prevention of diabetes in the community.

"Before you get into treatment, you have to have commitment first. You should be committed to change," said Gregoria Fitial-Omar on Saturday.

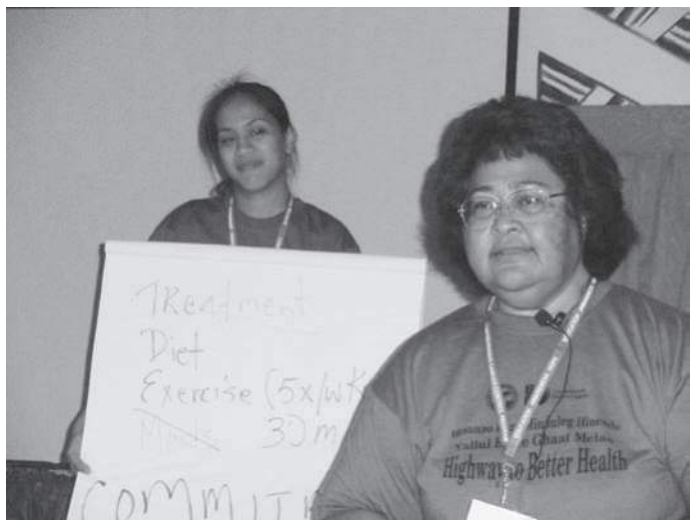
Omar was among the presenters and panelists during the 2nd CNMI-Wide Diabetes Health Community Forum: Highway to Better Health held at the Saipan Southern High School cafeteria on March 5.

About 150 residents of San Antonio, Afetnas, As Gonno, Dandan, Koblerville, As Lito, Fina Sisu, As Perdido, San Vicenter and Tuturam participated in the event.

Organized by the Commonwealth Diabetes Coalition, Diabetes Prevention and Control Program of the Department of Public Health, and the Ayuda Network, the forums aim to address the prevalence of diabetes and other non-communicable diseases through targeted social and behavioral strategies at the "taro roots" level.

Prior to the forum, organizers led the participants in a health walk followed by a free health screening conducted by volunteers from DPCP, the Northern Marianas College Nursing students, and Hardt Eye Clinic staff. The DPH team also conducted a flu vaccine drive.

The roster of presenters and panelists included Vina Saures of the Public School System, executive director Pamela Sablan of the Council for Developmental Disabilities, Patricia Coleman of NMC-CREES, Dr. James U. Hofschneider of the Medical Associates of the Pacific, Dr. Don Hardt of the Hardt Eye Clinic, and Dr. Dean Reedstrom of the Seventh-Day Adventist Clinic.



CLARISSA V. DAVID

Retired nurse and community advocate Gregoria Fitial-Omar, right, discusses the importance of commitment in the treatment and prevention of diabets while Diabetes Coalition Education and Outreach Committee chair Vinycia Seman looks on during the 2nd CNMI-Wide Diabetes Health Community Forum last Saturday at the Saipan Southern High School cafeteria.

Omar noted that one must understand what the disease is, what causes it, and ways to prevent it.

"Diabetes is very simple to understand but has a lot of complications," she added.

According to Omar, diabetes is a "preventable" and "treatable" disease caused by too much intake of carbohydrates-rich food and deficiency in good nutrients in one's body.

"If you prolong diabetes, you will run into a lot of complications that may cause you money and the government money," said Omar.

Diabetes complications include loss of sight, heart attack, hepatitis, kidney chemodialysis, and amputation of the feet or legs.

Omar said diabetes incidence in the CNMI is not concentrated among Chamorros and Carolinians alone but also among the nonresidents who have adopted the local diet of rice and root crops such as taro and potatoes.

"Treatment of diabetes is all about changing lifestyle and having commitment. It's simple," she emphasized.

Omar noted that lack of commitment on the part of the patient significantly hinders the treatment of diabetes. "Commitment is the barrier of change. It's the enemy of our community. If you do not have the commitment to change your lifestyle, you're not committed to helping yourself," she said.

Omar urged forum participants to commit to change by engaging in exercise or physical activity and promoting a balanced and healthy diet by "eating with colors" or having enough servings of fruits and vegetables every day.

Specialist nurses from Japan promote breast cancer awareness

By CLARISSA V. DAVID
clarissa_david@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Thirteen Japanese nurses specializing in breast cancer treatment were recently on island and volunteered their time to promote and support cancer awareness in the CNMI.

The nurses, led by Chiemi Ono of the Teikyo University School of Medicine Hospital Cancer Center, arrived on Friday and left by batches on Sunday and yesterday.

They set up a booth at the American Memorial Park grounds on March 5 for the 2011 Saipan Marathon organized by the Marianas Visitors Authority.

Commonwealth Cancer Association representatives joined the nurses at the booth where they had a breast model that demonstrated the correct way of breast self-examination and detect regular cysts and cancerous lumps.

The volunteers also distributed pink ribbon pins and stickers, brochures in Japanese and English, and other giveaways that support their cause.

Through interpreter Satsuki Perez, Ono explained how they were invited by the MVA through Hiroko Tenorio.

"We're here to support breast cancer awareness and promote the importance of regular breast check-ups in the hospital for early detection and prevention of breast cancer," she told *Saipan Tribune*.

Ono said the 2011 Saipan Marathon was an opportunity for them to promote breast cancer awareness since the event received better media exposure through Kanpei Hazama, a popular Japanese comedian with prostate cancer and promotes cancer awareness by joining marathons.

Ono said it was also important for them that they brought the breast model to educate not only the Japanese participants in the marathon but also community members on the proper way of examining oneself for breast cancer.

Ono disclosed plans to come back and participate in next year's marathon as well as meet with breast cancer patients and survivors.

"We do feel very honored to have [the nurses] here to share their knowledge on diagnosis and early detection. It's definitely a great opportunity to partner with them," CCA program manager Tina Sablan told *Saipan Tribune.*

Sablan said they look forward to organizing a meeting between the Japanese nurses and breast cancer survivors in the community when they return next year.

Cancer survivor Angel Ray T. Guerrero, who dropped by the booth for a visit, praised the Japanese nurses for volunteering their time and skills to raise cancer awareness.

"It's good to come out here and see all these people who want to help others with cancer. It's good to support survivors and patients and find out what's causing this and how we can help," he said.

Guerrero, a cancer survivor himself, disclosed that he is currently focused on reviving the Laly 4 Youth Center, which was closed down last year due to theft and burglary.

He said he will be meeting with lawmakers and the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs to discuss funding for the project.

CLARISSA V. DAVID

From left, Satsuki Perez, Chiemi Ono of the Cancer Center at the University School of Medicine Hospital, Commonwealth Cancer Association program manager Tina Sablan, cancer survivor Angel Ray T. Guerrero, and CCA member Jack Hardy.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Free Webinar on PDF accessibility

The CNMI Council on Developmental Disabilities is inviting the public to a free Webinar titled "Quick Checks for PDF Accessibility" on March 9, 2011, at 5:30am to 6:30am, at the CDD conference room at Bldg. 1312 on Capital Hill. It will feature Christy Blew, IT accessibility specialist, at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Generally, PDF files are not created with accessibility in mind. There are several methods to check a PDF file for accessibility as well as make changes to the PDF to meet accessibility guidelines. This session will show participants some "Quick Checks" they can perform on a PDF file to see if it is accessible. Session will also talk about some of the ways PDF files are created and how that makes a difference in accessibility.

Call the CNMI Council on Developmental Disabilities at 664-7000/1/2 or cell 287-7006 to register or for more information. ***(PR***

Tobacco cessation classes begin

If you smoke or chew tobacco and you're ready to quit, it's not too late to sign up for Tobacco Cessation classes at the Community Guidance Center. The classes started yesterday, and will meet every Monday from 5pm-6:30pm until April 11, 2011.

For more information or to register, call the Quitline at 323-QUIT (323-7848) or the Community Guidance Center at 323-6586. ***(PR)***

Autism awareness walkathon in the works

With Autism Awareness month coming up, five students plan on reaching out to the community to help spread awareness. A coalition of National Honor Society presidents, known as the National Honor Society Alliance, is planning an "Autism Awareness Walkathon" to take place on April 2, 2011, which is Autism Awareness Day. They are raising funds to help get vital information in the hands of teachers and parents as well as start a student outreach program in the CNMI. Part of the NHS Alliance are Kagman High School's Alexis Hofschneider, Saipan Southern High School's Kaelani Demapan, Marianas High School's Dowen Jocson, Mount Carmel School's Maria Balajadia, and Grace Christian Academy's Lauren Hofschneider. If you have any questions or would like to help, contact Maria Balajadia at 285-9375 or via e-mail at maria.balajadia@gmail.com. ***(PR)***

John Gonzales LIVE this week

John Gonzales LIVE will take up PSS Accreditation on Wednesday, March 9, 2011, from 7pm to 8pm on KSPN Channel 2. Guests are Lynette L. Villagomez, PSS T&FASEG program coordinator; Vanessa Hocog, principal, Sinapalo Elementary School; Glenn Muna, principal, Oleai Elementary School.

John Gonzales LIVE airs Wednesday and rebroadcasts on Sunday, March 13, and Monday, March 14, all from 7pm to 8 pm. John Gonzales LIVE also rebroadcasts worldwide to the listening audience of BetelNut Radio (www.betelnutradio.com) on March 9, 2011, at 6pm Pacific Standard Time and 9pm Eastern Standard Time (Thursday, March 10, 2011 at 12pm Chamorro Standard Time in the CNMI and Guam).

Viewers can participate by calling 287-4230, texting 285-META (6382), or emailing johngonzales@pticom.com. ***(PR)***

PSS affirms choice of vendor for network design project

» Losing bidders' protests denied

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
moneth_deposa@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Education Commissioner Rita A. Sablan has affirmed her procurement and regulation officer's decision to award the Public School System's network design and installation project to off island-based Pacific Star Communications and denied the protests filed by losing bidders.

Marianas Wireless general manager and owner Roy Ortizo and Megabyte of Saipan president Brian Clayton had separately protested the contract's award to PacStar, accusing Robert Florian, PSS' procurement and supply officer, of bias and using favoritism in making the decision.

Sablan, in separate statements to the two companies, defended the transaction and affirmed Florian's decision. She said both firms could appeal the matter to the Office of the Public Auditor if they remain dissatisfied.

Clayton had alleged that PacStar did not have a CNMI business license at the time of the bid submission and did not pay the CNMI gross receipts tax.

Sablan pointed out, though, that a bidder or proposer is not required to have a business license in order to submit a bid or proposal, but must obtain one before being allowed to sign and begin performance under a contract.

"PacStar has acknowledged in writing that it did not have a CNMI business license for or pay business gross receipts tax on the previous contract because it was unaware of these requirements but is 'in the process of evaluating our tax liability with outside tax counsel. If is determined that there is tax liability on the network health assessment contract, we will remit payment on taxes owed to the CNMI government," Sablan told Clayton in her letter.

The project originally had four proposers; only two firms were given the opportunity to give their "best offers": PacStar and White Coconut Computers. Both Marianas Wireless and Megabyte were omitted.

"The RFP review and evaluation process involves identifying proposers who are in the 'competitive range,' those who will be allowed to participate further in the selection process and any subsequent evaluations, including the evaluation of best and final offers. This process requires that a judgment be made to exclude from further consideration those proposals which in comparison with other proposals, have no chance of being selected for award," said Sablan.

The commissioner also denied the protest of Marianas Wireless, citing the evaluation committee's narrative and numerical assessments are in the procurement file and were used for the project.

Ortizo alleged that PSS awarded the project based upon favoritism due to a previous contract awarded to PacStar, which Sablan denied.

"The PSS procurement officer had no personal involvement in the evaluation process for this PacStar contract or the previous one mentioned. The officer's involvement was limited to a final review of the evaluation committee's work and of the recommendation of the E-Rate coordinator for the PacStar selection," added the commissioner.

Sablan said the delay in the contract award was simply a result of giving PacStar time to comply with the CNMI Business License, tax, and fees requirements.

PDM Promoters nets 920 lbs of trash in cleanup

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

PDM Promoters Inc. volunteers pose for a group photo after their monthly cleanup in the Garapan area on March 6. The group collected a total of 920 lbs of trash.

By CLARISSA V. DAVID
clarissa_david@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

About 920 lbs of trash were collected by volunteers of PDM Promoters Inc. during their monthly cleanup in Garapan on March 6.

PDM Promoters chief executive officer and Kinpachi Restaurant owner Misako Kamata led the group of 32 volunteers in picking up trash along Coral Tree Avenue to the fire station then Beach Road straight up to Joeten Shopping Center.

Sonia Siwa of PDM Promoters said other volunteers included the Saipan Awaodori members, two students from Saipan Southern High School, and *Hafadai Magazine* staff.

She said the monthly cleanup is part of the community service rendered by the young dancers as members of the Awaodori team.

"We explain this to the new members as well as their parents right from the start to instill in them the value of keeping our surroundings clean and taking care of the environment," she said.

Siwa disclosed that this month's cleanup was held on a Sunday instead of Saturday to give way to the 2011 Saipan Marathon.

"We've noticed that there was a lot of trash in the area compared to the last cleanup we did in February. Even the kids noticed it," she told *Saipan Tribune*.

According to Siwa, most of the trash they collected were styrofoam containers, empty water bottles, and soda cans.

Siwa encouraged all business establishments in Garapan, the island's main tourist district, to join in their efforts to maintain the cleanliness of the area.

"Let's keep Garapan and the whole island clean. We don't want visitors and tourists to see trash scattered anywhere," she said.

On behalf of PDM Promoters, Siwa thanked Joe Kaipat of the Division of Environmental Quality for providing trash supplies and juice drinks for the volunteers.

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION

NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY
of
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT FUNDS
for
PROGRAM YEAR 2011
and
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

This advertisement is paid for by NMHC with CPD Funds.

The Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, through the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) is announcing the availability of $1,591,011.00 in Community Planning and Development (CPD) funds available from the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. NMHC anticipates receiving $880,151.00 in Community Development Block Grants (CDBG); $647,474 Home Investment Partnership (HOME); and, $63,386.00 Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) funds for Program Year (PY) 2011.

The CDBG funds, authorized under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, may be used for a wide range of community development activities to revitalize neighborhoods, provide affordable housing, expand economic opportunities, and improve community facilities and services. However, use of these funds must meet at least one of the national objectives which include: 1) to benefit low and moderate-income families; 2) to eliminate slum or blight conditions; or 3) to meet other urgent community development needs.

The CDBG program requires a grant recipient to certify that it will minimize displacement of persons as a result of activities assisted with CDBG funds. The CNMI government does not plan on undertaking any activity which will cause displacement of persons. In the event of any unforeseen displacement resulting from any CDBG funded activity, the CNMI government will comply with the requirements of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, its implementing regulation and applicable local law.

HOME funds may be used to create affordable housing through financing assistance, site acquisition or improvement, and rehabilitating existing residential dwellings as well as providing funds for new construction or purchase of a single-family residential dwelling. Use of HOME funds must benefit low-income families.

ESG funds may be used to rehabilitate or convert buildings into homeless shelters and for shelter operating expenses, supportive services and homeless prevention activities. Use of ESG funds must benefit the homeless.

Information concerning eligibility uses of the grant funds may be obtained upon request at the respective offices of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) located on Garapan, Saipan; San Jose, Village, Tinian; and, Songsong Village, Rota.

In order to plan ahead as to the use(s) of the PY 2011 allocation, the NMHC will be conducting hearings to obtain public input on community development and housing needs, and to provide information to the public on the status of the approved ongoing CDBG projects. The public hearings will be held as follows:

1. **On Rota, April 11, 2011, at 6:30 p.m. at the NMHC Office, Songsong Village;**
2. **On Tinian, April 12, 2011, at 6:30 p.m. at the CDA/NMHC Office in San Jose Village; and,**
3. **On Saipan, April 13, 2011, at 6:30 p.m. at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan.**

Accommodations for disabled individuals or other non-English speaking individuals who wish to attend the public hearing is available upon request by giving at least 24 hours notice prior to the meeting so that such needs can be arranged and provided. Additional inquiries concerning the CDBG program may be directed in writing to the Corporate Director, Northern Marianas Housing Corporation, P.O. 500514, Saipan, MP. 96950, or by calling Zenie P. Mafnas, Grant Writer/Planner at 234-6866 or 234-7689.

/s/ **Joshua T. Sasamoto**
Corporate Director

"NMHC is a fair housing agency and an equal opportunity provider, lender and employer"

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Lava spews 65 feet high after crater collapse

VOLCANO, Hawaii (AP)—A new vent has opened at one of the world's most active volcanoes, sending lava shooting up to 65 feet high, scientists at Kilauea volcano said Sunday.

The Hawaiian Volcano Observatory said the fissure eruption was spotted shortly after the floor at the Pu'u O'o crater collapsed around 5 p.m. Saturday. It occurred along the middle of Kilauea's east rift zone, about 2 miles west of Pu'u O'o.

"As a volcanogist, this is what we do. These are the moments we wait for," volcanogist Janet Babb told KHON2. "It is exciting to see an eruption begin particularly if you can see it from the very start."

Kilauea has been in constant eruption since Jan. 3, 1983.

At the summit, lava receded rapidly late Saturday but seemed to slow Sunday. There were also about 150 small earthquakes were recorded within Kilauea in the past 24 hours.

Scientists said areas near the vent could erupt or collapse without warning, posing a threat to visitors or hikers to the area. Also potentially lethal concentrations of sulfer dioxide gas could be present within about a half-mile downwind of vent areas.

Because of the latest activity, the Hawaii Volcanoes National Park has closed Chain of Craters Road and all east rift zone and coastal trails. Kulanaokuaiki campground was also closed until further notice.

Babb told the Hawaii Tribune-Herald that the fissure has expanded to about 535 yards long and that scientists were hiking into the remote area to observe the fissure and take readings.

No homes are under threat.

AP

The Big Island of Hawaii's Pu'u O'o crater is seen on Sunday, March 6, 2011. The crater floor collapsed on Saturday causing new eruptions along the east rift zone.

Can you identify

THE NMI Council for the Humanities, in collaboration with the *Saipan Tribune*, is running a series of photographs in this section every Tuesday and is inviting the public to identify the persons or places featured in this section.

If you can identify the persons or places in the picture, please contact the NMI Council for the Humanities by telephone (235-4785), via email (photo@nmihumanities.org) or by visiting the Council's office located in Springs Plaza, Gualo Rai. These images are from the Council's Historic Photograph Database which is currently being developed to help document the history and cultures of the CNMI.

No one called to identify the photo that appeared in the last column. They remain unidentified.

US tests inconclusive in Amelia Earhart search

SEAN MURPHY
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NORMAN, Oklahoma (AP)—Tests to determine if bone fragments found on a remote South Pacific island are the remains of Amelia Earhart are inconclusive, researchers announced Wednesday, dashing hopes they might help explain what happened to the famed aviator who disappeared in 1937 while trying to fly around the world.

Scientists at the University of Oklahoma attempted to detect human DNA from three bone fragments recovered last year by The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery, a group of aviation enthusiasts in Delaware that found the pieces of bone while on an expedition to Nikumaroro Island, about 1,800 miles (2,900 kilometers) south of Hawaii.

The group has uncovered several artifacts, including some old makeup and glass bottles from the 1930s that suggest Earhart and navigator Fred Noonan may have died as castaways on the island, said Ric Gillespie, director of the group.

"We knew this would be a tough job to get DNA from stuff that had laid around for 70 years," Gillespie said in a phone interview. "The woman's been missing for 74 years. We've been looking for her for 23 years. We have learned patience."

Researchers at OU said about one-half gram of bone material remains that could be tested later.

"For posterity, we have decided to preserve this remaining bone," Cecil Lewis, the director of OU's Molecular Anthropology Laboratory, wrote in his report. "There is reason for optimism that someday in the near future, less destructive and more sensitive genomic methods will be able to resolve the bone's origin. For now, the question of whether the bone is human must remain unanswered."

Lewis, who planned a news conference Thursday to elaborate on his findings, said tests are ongoing on clumps of material resembling soil or feces that also were recovered at the site.

In 1940, just three years after Earhart disappeared, a British overseer on the island recovered a partial human skeleton and several artifacts at what appeared to be a former campsite, Gillespie said. The bones later vanished, but Gillespie said the findings support their theory that Earhart was able to land on a reef surrounding the remote island and send distress signals that were picked up by distant ships.

"There's a tremendous story of a castaway here who was catching various things," Gillespie said. "We just don't know for sure who the castaway was."

Earhart was declared dead in 1939.

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

Mar. 8,1999

McPhetres: NMC cuts through people's lives

Northern Marianas College President Agnes McPhetres last Friday read a 26-page report that summarized the institution as well as her performance for over the last 16 years using the slogan "we're so much more than a degree-granting institution." While a series of slides showing a busy day of moving hospital beds out of the old Dr. Torres Hospital, the institution she led has blossomed to a comprehensive community college and addressed the economic development needs of the Commonwealth. She cited such programs as the Aqua culture Research, Business Development Center and the planned Business and Tourism Development Center.

Senator works to ease labor transfer

The legislature will ease employment transfer for foreign workers in the Northern Marianas in an attempt to deal with concerns from Sen. Frank Murkowski (R-Alaska) over the local policy after meeting with CNMI officials. A bill to be sponsored by Senate President Paul A. Manglona is expected to address the problem, but the upper house has yet to finalize the legislation seen as part of ongoing labor and immigration reforms on the island. According to the Senate leader, the measure will consider the expenses incurred by employers in recruiting workers from abroad when the government agrees to ease the transfer policy.

Mar. 8, 2000

Ex-finance chief asked to explain expenses

Assistant Attorney General Allan L. Dollison has asked former Finance Secretary Antonio R. Cabrera to identify the individuals who had benefited from his misuse and misappropriation of public funds amounting to $74,307.59. Mr. Dollison accused Mr. Cabrera of passing on his personal expenses to the CNMI government, which include a pair of imported Italian Ferragamo shoes worth $248 bought from DFS Saipan and $6.94 worth of donuts from Winchells Garapan. During his tenure, Mr. Cabrera led an extravagant life which was financed by the CNMI taxpayers amid the decline in government revenue brought about by the slowdown in the island's economy.

Funding for local reef protection assured

The United States Coral Reef Task Force has assured the Northern Marianas that funds in connection with coral reef protection will be given to the CNMI for the implementation of its own programs, said Coastal Resources Management acting Director Peter J. Barlas. Aside from implementing conservation measures, information and educational campaign are all part of the programs under the United States All Islands Coral Reef Initiative. A two-day meeting of the task force in Washington D.C. was attended by Mr. Barlas last week where he also met with officials of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. CRM has submitted a detailed description of the coral reef protection plan to the task force.

Mar. 8, 2001

NMI defaults in payment to Hawaii-based hospital

Queen's Medical Center recently asked the Commonwealth government to honor its agreed bi-weekly payment of $300,000 for its off-island medical referral treatments. In a letter to Rep. William S. Torres, Queen's officer Carol Lee said Saipan has once again failed to pay on time despite substantial information provided by the hospital on accounts receivable. "The AR is fairly substantial so we would like to see continued payments on a regular basis," Ms. Lee wrote the legislator. Because of the continued discrepancies on payments and billing of services rendered to medical referral patients, Mr. Torres urged Public Health and Group Health and Life Insurance Branch officials to sit down and reconcile accounts payable with Queen's.

SGMA eyes recycling partnership with NMC

The Saipan Garment Manufacturers Association is asking the Business Development Center of the Northern Marianas College to establish a non-profit corporation that would help raise funds out of garment wastes disposed of at the Puerto Rico dump. Students, interns, or regular employees could run the new company, According to SGMA Executive Director Richard A. Pierce. "SGMA would guarantee access to the substantial scrap material that is currently trashed, burned or, to a limited extent, recycled on a daily basis." He explained that all potentially recyclable materials would be sorted at each individual factory.

Women weigh in on issue of granting status to guest workers

By CLARISSA V. DAVID
clarissa_david@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

CLARISSA V. DAVID

Sen. Jude U. Hofschneider, Senate Federal Relations and Independent Agencies Committee chair, is flanked by CNMI Women Association president Susana Blas Deleon Guerrero and secretary Betsy Cruz during a meeting at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center last March 3.

Members of a women's organization came together Thursday last week at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe to express their views and opinions about the Senate's recommendation to the U.S. Congress on granting nonresident workers in the CNMI improved immigration status.

Organized by the CNMI Women Association, the meeting drew the participation of some 15 women and Senate Vice President Jude U. Hofschneider (R-Tinian) and was part of the International Women's Month celebration.

Hofschneider, who is also the Senate Federal Relations and Independent Agencies Committee chair, summed up the events that occurred after the implementation of U.S. Public Law 110-229, the law that transferred control of immigration in the CNMI to the federal government.

The Senate's final report to the U.S. Congress recommends the granting of an immigration status similar to those from Freely Associated States to nonresident workers who have been in the CNMI at least 10 years as of May 2008.

FAS citizens or those from Palau, the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia can freely travel to, work, live and study in the U.S. mainland and territories.

CNMI Women Association secretary Betsy Cruz emphasized the importance of submitting a recommendation to Congress to inform them what the native people of the CNMI, the Chamorros and Carolinians, have to say about granting status to nonresident workers.

"[W]e need to strike a balance and that's where the Senate is coming in," said Cruz, adding that the Senate is "taking a step forward" with the recommendation they will submit.

Vice Speaker Felicidad Ogumoro (Cov-Saipan) noted that the recommendation "would take into consideration the well-being of the Northern Mariana Islands and its people."

Agnes McPhetres, former Northern Marianas College president, maintained that the FAS-status recommendation is only "a temporary measure" since nonresident workers can eventually become U.S. citizens once their U.S.-born children petition them.

According to McPhetres, the different nationalities of the nonresident workers create a "division" and not immersion. "I'm feeling like a foreigner in my own place," she added.

McPhetres said efforts must be focused in trying to assimilate the diverse cultures of nonresident workers into the local culture.

"If you want to be part of the CNMI, please be part of the CNMI and don't bring the foreign element into the culture of the CNMI. Be part of the CNMI!" she emphasized.

The women who attended the meeting agreed to push for legislation that would address the current situation in the Commonwealth.

Citing Guam and Tucson as examples, CNMI Women Association president Susana Blas Deleon Guerrero wants to implement the sole use of the CNMI's official languages—Chamorro, Carolinian, or English—in the workplace and only allow conversations in the foreign workers' native language during break time or after work.

Deleon Guerrero recommended that students should not be allowed to graduate from high school without taking two Chamorro language subjects to encourage even the children of nonresident workers to converse using the indigenous languages.

With the new composition of Congress, the women also recommended that CNMI delegate Gregorio Kilili Sablan work on amending P.L. 110-229.

Deleon Guerrero said their group will meet with Sablan later this month to discuss their concerns on the federal law as well as other issues affecting the islands such as the submerged lands.

MMAC committee meeting today

The 2011 Marianas March Against Cancer committee will be holding a committee meeting today, March 8, 5:30pm, at the Hard Rock Cafe. All committee members are encouraged to attend.

The 2011 MMAC committee will also be holding a team captains meeting on Thursday, March 10, 2011, at 5:30pm, at the Hyatt Regency's Chamolinian Room. All 2011 team captains or their representatives are invited to attend this urgent meeting. Businesses, schools, government agencies, non-profit organizations, and families who want more information on the 2011 MMAC are encouraged to attend.

The 2011 Marianas March Against Cancer will be held on May 13-14, from 6pm to 6am, at the Hopwood Junior High School field in Chalan Piao.

For more information visit www.ccamarianas.org or call 682-0050. ***(PR)***

Brilliant Star School offers free yoga class

Brilliant Star School is offering a free yoga class for adults on Navy Hill. The Wednesday morning classes include guided instruction on the basics of yoga, breathing, and relaxation.

The timing of the class is chosen to coincide with parents who are dropping off their children at school—any school. The classes are open to the greater community.

"Our first class consisted of many parents from both Brilliant Star and Whispering Palms, but also included individuals who did not have children attending school," said yoga instructor Susan Baetge.

The class will run every Wednesday morning from March 2 to April 20 and is intended for those who are new to yoga or who would like to have a gentle class. Class time is 8:15am to 9:15am. Baetge says to bring your own mat (available for purchase at Dolphin), water, and a bath size towel (for modifications).

"I have never felt so relaxed and rejuvenated! …I could have listened to Susan for hours," said Erin Ewing, who is taking the class while five months pregnant.

Why would a Montessori school offer adult yoga classes? "It's simple," said principal Richard Sikkel. "Part of Montessori education includes modeling of behavior by the adults in the children's life. We know from Maria Montessori's research that children learn what they see. We as educators strive to surround the children at our school with good examples not only in academics, but mental and physical health. In that respect it makes perfect sense for the children to see their parents and others adults participate in an activity that has lifelong health benefits."

"In addition to creating a good example for children, the classes are [also] meant to give back to our community, another Montessori concept," said Baetge.

Baetge is a Yoga Alliance certified instructor with 500 hours of training in her field. She has taught classes at Palms Resort and Gold's Gym. She is also a certified Montessori instructor. "It feels great to combine my two passions: Montessori Education and yoga," she said.

In addition to the free daytime class the school is also home to evening classes Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, at 5:15pm for a charge of $5.

For more information contact Baetge at yogawavesaipan@gmail.com or Sikkel at 670-323-7827 (STAR). ***(Brilliant Star)***

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
RFP NO.: RFP11-DEQ-044

SUBMISSION: APRIL 06, 2011 TIME: 2:00 P.M.

"MARIANA ISLANDS BLEACHING RESPONSE FOR THE DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY"

THE SCOPE OF WORK FOR THIS PROJECT MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY, GUALO RAI CENTER, SUITE 101 FROM MONDAY TO FRIDAY, 7:30 A.M.-4:30 P.M., EXCEPT ON CNMI LEGAL HOLIDAYS.

ALL INQUIRIES SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO MR. FRANK M. RABAULIMAN, DIRECTOR OF DEQ AT (670) 664-8500 NO LATER THAN CLOSE OF BUSINESS, **MARCH 28, 2011.**

THIS IS A FEDERALLY FUNDED PROJECT; AS SUCH, LOCAL PREFERENCE *IS NOT AVAILABLE*, BECAUSE ITS USE IS PROHIBITED BY FEDERAL LAW GRANTING FUNDING FOR THIS PROJECT.

/s/ FRANK M. RABAULIMAN
DIRECTOR, DEQ

/s/ HERMAN S. SABLAN
DIRECTOR, P&S

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NOTICE OF REGULAR MEETING

Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 11, the Commonwealth Ports Authority hereby gives notice that a Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors will be held on Friday, March 11, 2011, at 10:00 a.m. in the Departure Area, Second Floor, Rota International Airport, Rota. The following items are on the agenda for the above-referenced meeting:

AGENDA

I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS
1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Adoption of Agenda
4. Adoption of Minutes (January 28, 2011)

II. BOARD ORGANIZATION
1. Election of Officers
2. Appointments of Standing Committee Chairs and members

III. CORRESPONDENCES

IV. COMMITTEE REPORTS
1. Financial Affairs Committee
2. Airport Facilities Committee
3. Seaport Facilities Committee
4. Personnel Affairs Committee

V. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

VI. OLD BUSINESS
1. None

VII. NEW BUSINESS
1. Introduction of Rota Germanium Water
2. Financial Consultant Contract Renewal
3. Supplemental Request: Saipan International Airport's Precision Approach Path Indicators (PAPI)
4. Saipan Industrial Gas, Inc.'s request for extension
5. Tinian Terminal Updates
6. Saipan International Airport Taxiway Deductive Change Order No. 16
7. Saipan International Airport Power Upgrade Change Order No. 5
8. Saipan International Airport Runway Rehabilitation Change Order No. 4
9. Hanson Cement
10. IP&E and Mobil leases
11. Seaport Output Fuel Fee
12. Seabridge, Saipan Marine and Saipan Crewboat Assets
13. Personnel Matter: Employment Contract Renewals
14. Tinian International Airport A/E Amendment No. 2

VIII. MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT

X. EXECUTIVE SESSION

XI. ADJOURNMENT

All interested persons are welcome to attend and to submit written or oral testimony on the above agenda items.

MARGARITA T. PRATER
Acting Chairperson, Board of Directors
March 7, 2011

Northern Mariana Islands RETIREMENT FUND

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to 1 CMC, Division 9, §9910, Governor Benigno R. Fitial and Lt. Governor Eloy S. Inos, through the NMI Retirement Fund Board of Trustees/Workers' Compensation Commission/Group Health & Life Insurance Trust Fund, are hereby giving notice that the Board of Trustees will hold its Regular meeting Friday, March 11, 2011 at 10:00 a.m. at the NMI Retirement Fund Conference Room, Saipan.

AGENDA

I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS
A. Call to Order
B. Roll Call
C. Adoption of Agenda
D. Adoption of Minutes of Meetings
1. December 17, 2010 (Regular)
2. December 27, 2010 (Special)
3. January 14, 2011 (Regular)
4. February 25, 2011 (Special)

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS

III. REPORTS
A. Communications
1. Chairman/Trustees
2. Administrator/Deputy
B. Status / Updates
1. Administrative
2. Action Items (Summary)
C. Investments
D. Accounting
1. NMI Retirement Fund
2. GHLITF
3. WCC
E. Board Committees
1. Operations, Personnel and Review
2. Finance & Investment
3. Special
F. Internal Auditor

IV. LEGAL MATTERS
A. Reports
1. Legal / Board Counsel
2. Administrative Hearing Officer

V. OLD BUSINESS
A. NMIRF Case No. 10-006
B. NMIRF Case No. 10-008
C. AHO Contract
D. New Asset Allocation Transition Update

VI. NEW BUSINESS
A. FY 2011 Revised Budget
B. FY 2012 Budget
C. NMIRF Case No. 10-005
D. FY2013 NMIRF Funding Mechanism
E. Money Managers FY 2010 Presentation
F. Review of Regulation re Entry to Health Plan at Retirement
G. Implementation of Public Law 17-32 re COLA
H. Adoption as Permanent – Regs on Education Service Credit

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

VIII. MISCELLANEOUS
A. Announcements
B. Next Meeting
C. Adjournment

/s/ **SIXTO K. IGISOMAR**
CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
COMMONWEALTH BOARD OF NURSE EXAMINERS

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 11, the Commonwealth Board of Nurse Examiners Board of Directors, is hereby giving notice that the Board will be meeting on Wednesday, March 09, 2011. The meeting will be held at the Secretary's Conference Room 3, Commonwealth Health Center, Saipan, from 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm.

AGENDA

I. Preliminary Matters –
1. Roll Call

II. Call to Order

III. Adoption of Minutes -
1. February 16, 2011

IV. Adoption of Agenda
1. Office Manager
2. APRN Emergency Order

V. Adjournment

/s/ Aurelia G. Long, NP
Chairperson

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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The arcane world of diplomatic immunity

By KAL RAUSTIALA
LOS ANGELES TIMES

Surely a screenplay is already in the works. An American diplomat guns down two men in broad daylight in Lahore, Pakistan. The diplomat, who secretly works for the CIA, is apprehended and turned over to the local police. In his car, according to news reports, is a Glock 9-millimeter handgun, 75 rounds of ammunition, a global positioning system device, a survival kit and a satellite phone. As U.S. officials from the president on down press for his release, he is held in a Pakistani jail, his food sniffed by dogs for fear he will be poisoned.

This improbable story, of course, really happened in January. Although obscured by the unprecedented unrest in the Middle East, the affair of Raymond Davis—a one-time Green Beret who became a CIA contractor—threatens to endanger the critically important and highly volatile U.S.-Pakistan alliance.

The Obama administration asserts that Davis is a diplomat, who, under international law, is immune from local prosecution—even on charges of murder. Pakistan, facing an infuriated public highly suspicious of the United States in general and the CIA in particular, insists Davis' future is a matter for its courts to decide. On the streets of Pakistan, crowds have gathered to protest the killings and to burn American flags.

The issue has become so tense that last week top U.S. and Pakistani military officials, including Army Gen. David H. Petraeus, the commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, and Adm. Michael G. Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, met in Oman to try to sort out the crisis. American officials rightly fear that the incident, which may have been the result of an attempted robbery, will cause a free-fall in U.S.-Pakistan relations, jeopardizing key cooperation in the wars against the Taliban and al-Qaida.

To appreciate why the two nations are so divided on the Davis affair, it is essential to understand the arcane and musty world of diplomatic immunity.

For centuries nations have been trading envoys. Ambassadors, and the embassies they command, have long been treated as tiny outposts of the sending state—a chunk of territory that figuratively is taken from one state and dropped into another. And just as one state cannot invade or exercise legal jurisdiction within the territory of another, it follows that the embassy and ambassador are immune from the laws and jurisdiction of the host state.

These basic rules developed over many years but were codified in a 1961 treaty known as the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. That treaty specifies that embassy staff, as well as "administrative and technical staff"—the category Davis falls into—are immune from any prosecution by the host state. Nor can they be arrested or detained. Similarly, local police typically cannot seize the property of embassy staff or tax their income.

See THE ARCANE on next page

Our *dagan* in *Dong Bei*

By JAIME VERGARA
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Vergara is a regular contributor to the Saipan Tribune's *Opinion Section*

Mounds of brittle snow melt in the sun at the basketball playground between one of the university dormitories and the Friendship Villa where foreign students and guest lecturers are billeted at Shenyang Aerospace University. Sunshine brought out mildewed beddings as the dorm lawns look like they sprouted a garden of dormitory blankets, bed sheets, and bedspreads. The temperature remains at -5 below zero C but the normally hiding sun is out and winter indoors may just bear airing out.

We arrived a week early, our host not quite in gear to attend to us. Though the campus buildings look similar to the Ivy League structures like SMU in Dallas, the inside's Spartan amenities reflect the haste in constructing the edifices in this country's rush to modernize.

My 12th floor guest room is not unlike our dwelling on Saipan where the skeletal concrete was poured first and addition of electrical, water, sewage, air vents and communications lines were adjusted later. Windowpane winterizing is not hermitic, though the building is new. At our height where the Siberian winds howl with the wolves, seepage of cold air is amazingly liberal. Someone cut corners.

Cold as the weather is, the global news is hot. Added to the CCTV 9 broadcast, English Singapore-based Channel News Asia International is aired, and we might see a few more doors opening as the advisory group to China's Congress meet at their annual conference in Beijing, and sporadic conflagration of selected spots in the planet continues.

While the sobering quake in Christchurch is on global stage, Libya and Koronel Moammar Gadhafi hold the center. The real news, of course, is the shaken stock markets as industrialized nations cope with uncertain oil supply triggered not only in Libya but the ripple of unrest across the oil-producing world. Global recession accompanied by local inflation in industrialized and industrializing countries mystifies economists.

Gadhafi is not about to do a Mubarak; a mark of his recalcitrant behavior is the current "buying off" of Tripoli residents at $400 per head on the pretext that the doleout covers additional food cost brought about by the expected scarcity of consumables. Gadhafi's claim on a BBC/ABC interview that he is loved by Libyans who will die to protect him is contradicted by his own South African ambassador who asked that he steps down. A unanimous UN v. Gadhafi has got the Koronel cornered, not a Sun Tzu-favored strategy; it might actually lead Gadhafi to fight 'til he drops.

In the '70s, the Sultan of Brunei owned 150 Rolls Royce and no one batted an eye. We flew in once to Bandar Seri Begawan and the benefits of black gold stopped at the periphery of the Ayala-assisted palace. It is nigh high that democracies not just be wary of the royalties/personages they support but that they take a more holistic view of the utilization of global resource that fundamentally belongs to all rather than a select few who happen to build their outhouses on the terrain. Creation of royal Kuwait made the Iraq War inevitable; Iran is a consequence of our pimping with the Shah. Yemen and Oman are stirring; how far behind before we feel tremors beneath sheltered Saudi royals and the shudder with the collapse of the Arabian Gulf's display of ostentatious wealth?

We witnessed in the '80s in the Philippines two Middle East returning contract workers who were not willing to tolerate prevailing conditions that marginalized many; not from traditional political families or landed economic class, they injected their being into history. The provinces were never the same again. Returning nationals from embattled global "oil fields" are potential catalysts for change in their countries of origin.

There are 35,000 Chinese workers in Libya. The tenor of Chinese official rhetoric supports internal transformation 24 hours a day, and understanding through *yin-yang* dialogue is the preferred modus operandi. Any unrest stirring China is managed. Dissident literati failed to trigger recently a popular uprising through cyberspace's social networks though they inadvertently entangled the U.S. ambassador's curiosity of the gathered mob at the Wangfujing Mickey D's.

China is in a conciliatory stance while the U.S. is being bullishly belligerent and rudely provocative. Its military maneuvers transparently promotes *regime change* in North Korea, unnecessarily raising the blood pressure in Pyongyang and wilting the *Ying Hua* (cherry blossoms) in Tiananmen. Seoul repudiated its predecessor's Sunshine Policy of dialogue with the North and rattles sabers to drown runaway inflation. Unpopular Nippon Diet needs Uncle Sam's assurance that it is not pissed for being booted out of Okinawa. Seoul wants to talk with an open mind. Beleaguered Pyongyang aggressively raised the finger to say it is ready to simultaneously talk and go to war!

A low speed maglev joins the Beijing rail net. Zurich and Shanghai already has the system, and the high-speed version runs Japan's rapid *Shinkanzen* routes. China's #5 city Shenyang, metro-less two years ago, now has two lines running with the third coming to my university's footsteps. Obama proposes to upgrade the once segregated U.S. rails. LA took 25 years to produce a metro. China moves fast. How foolhardy can one be to park one's declining *dagan* in its deceptively manicured lawn?

EDITORIAL POLICY The *Saipan Tribune* welcomes comments on any article, column, editorial, or topic that may be of interest to the public. Letters to the editor must include the name, address, and contact number of the contributor. Letters that are critical in nature should focus on issues, not personalities. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, Century Insurance Building, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mangy dogs

I've recently taken up mountain biking and so far it's been an excellent form of exercise. It gets my lungs, blood and heart pumping. It's great on the joints, not high-impact and boring like running and I've lost some weight in the process. To top it all off, if you're lucky like I am, you can do it with a group of great friends and the ride really does seem a whole lot easier; it's great!

What's NOT so great is the mangy stray and unleashed dog problem on Saipan. A couple of weekends ago a group of us were heading to Wireless Ridge to ride down the XTERRA trail to Kingfisher. On our way there, one of our female riders was chased by a pack of dogs and was eventually bitten on her ankle, enough to pierce her flesh in a couple of places. She was a real trooper and pressed on but did she have to endure this pain if we would just have canine owners adhere to the leash law in the CNMI?

While driving home yesterday through western Garapan I witnessed a tourist riding a bike and a pack of dogs, walking along with their master, started attacking her. She was so startled that she swerved into traffic and was nearly clipped by the vehicle in front of me. I was relieved the driver was alert enough to avoid striking the tourist but I also thought, "Is it going to take a tourist or CNMI citizen to be critically injured or heaven forbid the extreme, *to die*, in order for our community to wake up and leash their dogs?

The CNMI has come a long way in building a very large biking community and establishing local and world-class events that support this excellent sport. I believe it is high time we join the ranks of states like Oregon, Washington and other similar communities that have made it a priority for biking enthusiasts to be safe. These states and communities have designated painted green biking lanes on thoroughfares, extensive motorist education, and strict laws that severely punish motorists for not yielding and canine owners for not leashing that cause a bicyclist to be sideswiped or attacked.

Our community was well informed in 1995 that by 2005 the World Trade Organization was going to relax quotas and some tariffs on apparel for favored nations. We spent 10 years ignoring, like a deer in headlights, wishing and hoping that the apparel Industry would not shut its doors on our community. Many over the last few years have heeded the warnings about cleaning up our communities for our only remaining industry, tourism. Certain issues continue to be ignored and we will continue to suffer as tourism is impeded by some of our very citizens that do not take the warnings seriously. One of many things we can do to improve is to clean up the blight of mangy dogs that attack our citizens and our tourists because our economic bottom truly comes when our tourists stop coming in droves—oh crap!, it's already happening!

Alex Saban
Kagman II, Saipan

Protect integrity of residential areas

I have not had the chance nor the opportunity to review the new proposed amendment to the existing Saipan zoning law, but I would like to submit my concern that should be addressed and enforced by the zoning office here on Saipan and where applicable.

The Saipan zoning regulations should be enforced to the maximum extent practicable in protecting the integrity of all residential areas on the island of Saipan. The zoning office should not entertain any applications for re-zoning of any commercial projects located within any residential communities. We must leave all residential areas protected from the infestation of any commercial development. The zoning office should maintain the beauty and the integrity of residential communities. Garapan and other villages are already congested, with large three- to four-story commercial building situated within the confined areas of our residential communities. Residential houses are sandwiched between ugly warehouses, apartments complexes, and so forth. The zoning office should very strict and have zero tolerance for any proposed commercial structures to be erected or constructed within any residential communities regardless of their size.

All commercial and industrial type development should be placed in the right location as zoned. I will support all rural and mixed commercial area for re-zoning as long as they are located on the main highway and main highway only. All commercial projects planned within any secondary roadways and beyond should not be allowed at all except or unless they are confined within the rural or mixed commercial areas. Noise, pollution, traffic, and other environmental concerns are placed within our sensitive residential communities by commercial construction. By allowing for re-zoning in any residential areas or communities, your office will inevitably be setting a very bad precedent and more applicants will follow. So in the spirit of preserving, maintaining and keeping a sound, safe, and healthy residential community, let us not even review, accept, nor allow any commercial applications to be accepted or even entertained for future projects that will require any magnitude of development within the confined area of our residential communities.

Applicants may indicate that there is an existing commercial structure adjacent to their properties; this does not matter. If the land is situated in any residential sites, it should not be entertained at all. It is high time the zoning office begins denying these types of applications.

Marcelino "Max" Aguon
Chalan Kanoa, Saipan

Keep Saipan clean

Dear the people of Saipan: I am writing to share my concern about the littering problem on Saipan. People from all over the world visit families or just come to see our beautiful island, but the roadsides, buildings, beaches, and tourist sites are often filled with trash left behind by inconsiderate and thoughtless people. When I see this, I feel sad and upset because the trash is slowly eating up our beautiful island, and visitors will think that we don't know how to take care of this place we call home. It is my hope and wish that the people of Saipan will start to show some island pride by collecting their trash when they go to beaches and parks. I also hope that businesses will do their part by cleaning up the outside of their buildings. Let's work together to keep our Saipan clean and green!

Hector Efraim
6th Grade student
Gregorio T. Camacho Elementary School
San Roque, Saipan

Support for ferry service to Rota

Thank you, Ambrose, for expressing your view and support for the need of Rota for a ferry vessel to service passengers, tourists, and goods. I deeply share with you the need to have a ferry service between Guam and Rota. Definitely, Rota has been experiencing hardships in terms of double shipping costs added to the costly airfare, and this really needs immediate attention. There is no doubt the people of Rota have been living with high cost of commodities because of costly shipping charges. It's about time that such idea of having a ferry service between Rota and Guam be pursued so that people will benefit, with the possibility of a lower and more reasonable shipping cost. By having a direct shipping cost, it could be a great advantage for Rotanese who wish to travel on weekends to Guam through the ferry for shopping of goods and other needs because of the low ocean fare and non-limited cargo weight as compared to limited air shipping and costly indirect commercial shipping.

I further agree with Ambrose that a ferry service between Guam and Rota could help make the casino industry prosper. Definitely, once the ferry service is made available, visitors and tourists from our neighboring island of Guam will be able to come to Rota constantly for relaxation, sightseeing, and enjoyment. The anticipated military buildup in Guam will also benefit Rota as we expect the military population to increase within the region and the uniqueness and beauty of Rota may attract them for their reaction and relaxation.

If I recall correctly, a Rota senator previously wrote Rep. Greg Kilili Sablan about a plan to secure funding from the U.S. Transportation Department to purchase a ferry for Rota. So far, there is no official action on the request. This might be the right time now for Rep. Kilili to pursue this request, as we are well aware that $77 million in ARRA funds are still available and unspent by the CNMI. Perhaps part of the ARRA funds can also be used to improve Rota's east and west harbors. In fact, the mayor of Rota had requested funding assistance for $25 million to revitalize and improve the east side harbor and dock facilities. This request can be included if allowable. All these necessities to improve Rota's dock and harbor facilities are vital to make them accessible to ferries and larger commercial vessels that will benefit our businesses and future economic development.

Leaders must act now. Rota definitely will be affected most if we don't take advantage of the remaining ARRA funding and of course those unspent CIP funding that were appropriated under 702 or 902. Rota still needs a lot of improvements in terms of CIP and federal projects. A lot of infrastructures could be accomplished only through CIP and federal grants. The diversion of unspent federal funds to other insular territories will be a big loss to our island community. Rota needs changes to bring it to the next level. It's about time for Rotanese to enjoy shopping for low-priced commodities and other essential needs, perhaps through access to a ferry service between Rota and Guam. The growth of our casino industry depends on our effort to entice and diversify through changes of our policies such as Article 12 and in kind contributions that will perhaps attract foreign investors to invest not only on casino but other industries in our region that will promote our economic development. The island of Rota is a haven for visitors and tourist. I am pretty sure that working together for the good of our island of Rota will eventually lead us to success in our quest for a better life and economic prosperity.

Rufo Maratita
Sinapalo, Rota

THE ARCANE

From Page 10

Given these rules, it is no surprise that spies are often hidden among embassy staff. The only recourse for a government that suspects a diplomat is really a spy is to send him or her back home. For example, a CIA agent named Cheri Leberknight, who worked at the American Embassy in Moscow and had diplomatic immunity, was captured in 1999 by Russian agents while en route to meet an informant. She was turned over to U.S. officials and sent home. Many similar incidents have occurred around the world.

The rules of diplomatic immunity function to keep international relations flowing smoothly. Were diplomats subject to arrest or even taxation, local officials might harass them or use their police powers as a pretext to pressure the other nation politically. Diplomats would be like hostages, at the mercy of local governments and unable to do their job effectively.

Of course, diplomatic immunity creates problems too, as the Davis affair amply illustrates. United Nations diplomats in New York, for instance, famously refuse to pay parking tickets. (At least some do: One study found that diplomats from Canada, Sweden and Japan had few delinquent tickets, while those from Chad, Sudan and Albania had many more—and in the case of Kuwait, nearly 250 unpaid tickets per diplomat.)

But worse crimes do occur. In 1997, a drunken diplomat from the former Soviet republic of Georgia caused a five-car pileup in Washington that killed a Maryland teenager. And in 1984, a British police officer named Yvonne Fletcher was killed by bullets from the Libyan Embassy in London, apparently fired by a diplomat.

Fletcher's killer never faced prosecution in Britain. But the Georgian diplomat was tried in the United States and sentenced to seven to 21 years in prison, because Georgia waived his immunity. As this implies, diplomatic immunity is not ironclad. But it can only be removed by a diplomat's own government.

There is no sign that the Obama administration intends to strip Davis of his immunity. Nor does Pakistan seem inclined to send him back to the United States, though various deals, including a possible prisoner swap between the two nations, have apparently been floated. Many Pakistanis are furious about the killings and see the Davis affair as proof that the CIA is orchestrating plots and running rampant inside their national borders. Meanwhile, Davis remains in a Pakistani jail as the two governments struggle to find a solution. One side or the other will soon have to blink.

Kal Raustiala is professor of law and director of the Burkle Center for International Relations at UCLA. This article was written for the Los Angeles Times.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲86° ▼76°	▲86° ▼76°	▲86° ▼76°	▲86° ▼76°	▲86° ▼76°

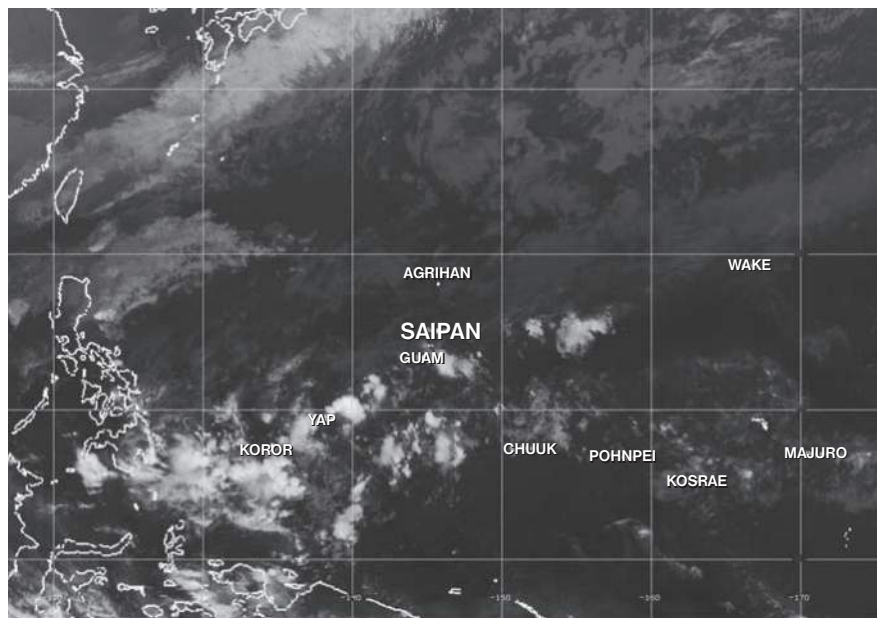
Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Thundershowers	▲85	▼77
Palau	Thunderstorms	▲85	▼77
Yap	Thunderstorms	▲85	▼76
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	▲82	▼77
Pohnpei	Rain	▲85	▼76
Kosrae	Rain	▲87	▼77
Majuro	Rain	▲84	▼76

Around The Globe

Auckland	Sunny	▲69	▼60
Beijing	Sunny	▲54	▼27
Hong Kong	Showers	▲62	▼60
Honolulu	Mostly Sunny	▲79	▼70
London	Sunny	▲50	▼31
Los Angeles	Sunny	▲69	▼48
Manila	Thundershowers	▲85	▼75
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	▲74	▼60
Miami	Sunny	▲82	▼67
New York	Partly Cloudy	▲48	▼31
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	▲49	▼36
Paris	Mostly Sunny	▲55	▼33
Pusan	Partly Cloudy	▲48	▼33
Rome	Sunny	▲52	▼34
Salem	Rain	▲52	▼46
San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	▲61	▼49
Seoul	Mostly Sunny	▲39	▼27
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	▲51	▼36
Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	▲53	▼35

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, MONDAY, MARCH 7, 2011
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A cold front extends southwestward from 25N175E to 23N172E then continues as a shear line just north of Wake Island to end southwest of Guam near 11N141E. Cloudiness and patchy rain are found along and up to 400 miles northwest of the shear line and cold front. A surface trough east of Koror extends northeastward from 4N138E to 10N142E. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms are occurring within an area bounded by a line from 5N130E to 3N144E to 11N146E to 7N130E back to 5N130E. This area includes Koror but is just south of Yap. Another surface trough near Chuuk curves northeastward from 3N150E to 10N154E. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms are present north of Chuuk and Pohnpei within 130 miles of a line from 8N147E to 10N153E to 9N160E.

Tides

Saipan Harbor

3:39 AM	Today	Low Tide:	0.6 Feet
9:24 AM	Today	High Tide:	1.8 Feet
4:06 PM	Today	Low Tide:	0.3 Feet
10:10 PM	Today	High Tide:	1.7 Feet

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:30 AM	6:26 PM
Wednesday	6:30 AM	6:26 PM
Thursday	6:29 AM	6:26 PM
Friday	6:28 AM	6:26 PM
Saturday	6:27 AM	6:27 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	8:10 AM	9:02 PM
Wednesday	8:49 AM	9:51 PM
Thursday	9:31 AM	10:42 PM
Friday	10:16 AM	11:35 PM
Saturday	11:06 AM	

GET YOUR PICTURES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS PUBLISHED—FOR FREE

The *Saipan Tribune* accepts for FREE publication the following:

PICTURES

- ISLAND SNAPSHOTS
  Birthdays, baptisms, christenings, family gatherings, reunions, club activities, and other community-related events.
- BIRTHDAY GREETINGS
  A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
- BUSINESS
  Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
- SAMU'T SARI
  Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
- TRAVELOGUE
  Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- COMMUNITY BRIEFS
  Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.
- CAMPUS BULLETIN
  Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

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For pictures:

- Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
- Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
- Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
- For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

For announcements:

- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and a phone number.
- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

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- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any PTI cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 16, 2010

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM

C09317	4:25am	5:15am	Daily
C09313	7:55am	8:45am	3, 6
C09313	8:30am	9:20am	1, 2, 4, 5, 7
C09601	12:10pm	1:00pm	1, 4, 5, 7
C09603	3:05pm	3:55pm	1, 2, 4, 5, 7
C09605	6:20pm	7:10pm	Daily
C09599	9:30pm	10:20pm	Daily

SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)

DL287	6:10am	8:45am	Daily
DL285	6:40am	9:15am	1, 3, ,4, 5, 6
DL297	4:35pm	7:15pm	Daily

SAIPAN-OSAKA (KIX)

OZ119	4:00am	6:40am	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

OZ608	3:20am	6:50am	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)

OZ606	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ606	2:40am	6:30am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
OZ604	3:20pm	7:00pm	2, 4, 6, 7
OZ119	4:00am	11:25am	Daily via KIX

SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)

FM844	2:50am	5:40am	2, 6

SAIPAN-BEIJING (PEK)

CA988	3:15am	6:55am	1, 5 Dec 13, 17, 20, 24 & 27 only

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ606/701	2:10am	11:50am	1 via ICN
OZ606/701	2:40am	11:50am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
C09317/891	4:25am	9:45am	3, 6 via GUM
DL285/173	6:40am	10:15pm	1, 3, 4, 5, 6 via NRT
C09313/933	7:55am	9:25pm	3 via GUM
C09313/893	7:55am	11:00pm	3 via GUM-Palau
C09603/933	3:05pm	9:25pm	5 via GUM
C09603/893	3:05pm	11:00pm	5 via GUM-Palau
OZ604/703	3:20pm	11:00pm	2, 4, 6, 7 ICN
OZ604/715	3:20pm	11:30pm	7
C09605/933	6:20pm	9:40pm	1, 2, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
C09599/PR111	9:30pm	7:50am+1	1, 3, 5, 6, 7 via GUM

SAIPAN-HONG KONG

OZ606/721	2:10am	12:00pm	1 via ICN
OZ606/721	2:40am	12:00pm	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
C09603/909	3:05pm	10:25pm	1, 5 via GUM
OZ604/723	3:20pm	10:35pm	2, 4, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ604/749	3:20pm	11:00pm	2, 4, 6, 7 via ICN

ARRIVALS

GUAM-SAIPAN

C09316	2:45am	3:35am	Daily
C09596	6:35am	7:25am	3, 6
C09596	7:00am	7:50am	1, 2, 4, 5, 7
C09600	10:05am	10:55am	1, 2, 4, 5, 7
C09602	1:40pm	2:30pm	1, 4, 5, 7
C09604	5:00pm	5:50pm	Daily
C09606	8:00pm	8:50pm	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

DL298	10:25am	3:05pm	Daily
DL286	7:45pm	12:20am+1	2, 3, ,4 ,5, 7
DL288	8:00pm	12:30am+1	Daily

OSAKA (KIX)-SAIPAN

OZ120	9:50am	2:20am+1	Daily

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

OZ607	9:10pm	2:20am+1	3, 4, 6, 7

SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN

OZ603	9:00am	2:20pm	2, 4, 6, 7
OZ120	7:10pm	2:20am+1	Daily via KIX
OZ605	7:40pm	1:00am+1	7
OZ605	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

SHANGHAI (PVG)-SAIPAN

FM843	7:15pm	1:50am+1	1, 5

BEIJING (PEK)-SAIPAN

CA987	6:40pm	1:55am+1	4, 7 Dec 12, 16, 19, 23 & 26 only

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

OZ704/603	12:10am	2:20pm	2, 4, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ716/603	12:30am	2:20pm	4, 6 via ICN
DL172/286	8:05am	12:20am+1	2, 3, 4, 5, 7
C0890/9606	10:55am	8:50pm	3, 6 via GUM
OZ702/605	1:10pm	1:00am+1	7 via ICN
OZ702/605	1:10pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
PR110/C09596	10:15pm	7:25am+1	6 via GUM
PR110/C09596	10:15pm	7:50am+1	1, 2, 4, 7 via GUM
C0892/9596	10:25pm	7:25am+1	3 via GUM-Palau
C0892/9596	10:25pm	7:50am+1	5 via GUM-Palau
C0934/9596	11:10pm	7:50am+1	1, 2, 7 via GUM
C0934/9596	11:25pm	7:50am+1	4 via GUM
C0934/9596	11:59pm	7:25am+1	3 via GUM
C0934/9596	11:59pm	7:50am+1	5 via GUM

HONG KONG-SAIPAN

OZ724/603	12:30am	2:20pm	2 ,4 ,6, 7 via ICN
OZ750/603	1:00am	2:20pm	2, 4, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ722/605	1:30pm	1:00am+1	7 via ICN
OZ722/605	1:30pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
C0910/9596	11:15pm	7:50am+1	1, 5 via GUM

Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1),Tuesday (2),Wednesday (3),Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CZ: China Southern; CO: Continental; FM: Shanghai Airlines; DL: Delta Airlines; OZ: Asiana; CA: Air China
ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The *Saipan Tribune* is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam–Rota			
FRE 100	7:30	8:00	Daily
Rota–Saipan			
FRE 100	8:20	8:50	Daily
Guam–Rota			
FRE 300	17:00	17:30	Daily
Rota–Saipan	17:50	18:20	Daily
Saipan–Rota			
FRE 200	9:30	10:00	Daily
Rota–Guam	10:20	10:45	Daily
Saipan–Rota			
FRE 400	18:55	19:25	Daily
Rota–Guam			
FRE 400	19:40	20:10	Daily
Saipan–Tinian			
FRE 101	6:45	6:55	Daily
FRE 103	7:30	7:40	Daily
FRE 105	8:00	8:10	Daily
FRE 107	8:40	8:50	Daily
FRE 109	9:10	9:20	Daily
FRE 111	10:45	10:55	Daily

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
FRE 113	11:40	11:50	Daily
FRE 115	13:00	13:10	Daily
FRE 117	14:30	14:40	Daily
FRE 119	16:00	16:10	Daily
FRE 121	16:40	16:50	Daily
FRE 123	17:40	17:50	Daily
FRE 125	18:30	18:40	Daily
Tinian–Saipan			
FRE 102	7:05	7:15	Daily
FRE 104	7:50	8:00	Daily
FRE 106	8:20	8:30	Daily
FRE 108	9:00	9:10	Daily
FRE 110	10:00	10:10	Daily
FRE 112	11:05	11:15	Daily
FRE 114	12:00	12:10	Daily
FRE 116	13:30	13:40	Daily
FRE 118	14:50	15:00	Daily
FRE 120	16:20	16:30	Daily
FRE 122	17:00	17:10	Daily
FRE 124	18:05	18:15	Daily
FRE 126	18:50	19:00	Daily

Business

After historic gains, are stocks nearing a bubble?

By MATTHEW CRAFT and DAVID K. RANDALL
AP BUSINESS WRITERS

Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke fielded the usual questions about inflation, tax cuts and government debt during a trip to Congress last week. Then a new question popped up: Is the Fed creating another bubble in stock prices?

Bernanke told the Senate Banking Committee he saw "little evidence" that was happening. But he cautioned: "Of course, nobody can know for sure."

That's the problem with bubbles. You only know you're in one when it pops.

This week is the second anniversary of the bull market that followed the financial meltdown. The Standard & Poor's 500-stock index is in its fastest climb since 1955, doubling since the market bottomed on March 9, 2009. In January and February alone, it's up 5.5 percent, the best start to a year since 1998.

Stock bubbles are famously hard to define. In 1999, for instance, investors thought it was perfectly rational to pay 62 times a company's earnings per share for a technology stock because it seemed dot-com companies couldn't lose. They only realized their error when many of those companies turned out to be nothing more than slick marketing ploys.

After two bubbles in the past 10 years—tech stocks and real estate—investors are suspicious of consistent gains that seem too good to be true. Some worry that the Fed's dramatic measures to pump up the economy mean the market's gains are an illusion. But a range of measurements suggest the market isn't in the midst of a bubble now. Instead, the stock market may simply be back to normal.

"The last two years were the great giveaway," says Stephen Lieber, the chief investment officer responsible for $6 billion in assets at Alpine Mutual Funds. Stocks had fallen so low during the panic that anyone who bought stocks on March 9, 2009, received a once-in-a-lifetime deal, he says. Caterpillar Inc., for instance, closed below $24 that day. It's now above $100.

While stock prices are much higher than they were two years ago, Bob Doll, market strategist for asset-management giant BlackRock, says investors aren't irrationally optimistic.

"Bubbles occur when there are high valuations, evidence of lots of borrowing to lever up to buy something," he says. "When I look around the landscape I have a hard time finding anything that looks like that."

One sign of a bubble would be if stocks rose far beyond what's normal by historical standards, says Bill Stone, chief investment strategist at PNC Asset Management Group. By that measure, it's not happening yet. According to Stone's research, since 1928, the average bull market runs almost five years and gains 164 percent. By comparison, this bull market has barely hit middle age.

AP

In this Feb. 25, 2011 file photo, specialist Donald Civitanova, left, talks with trader Jonathan Corpina as they work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange.

The fundamentals of the stock market don't suggest a bubble, either. The S&P 500 index now trades at 17.4 times the earnings of its stocks over the past year. In March 1999, during the tech bubble, the multiple was 30.6.

Corporations are expected to make record profits this year and have enough cash—$2 trillion—to pay bigger dividends and start buying back shares of stock, both of which make stocks more valuable.

"Corporate balance sheets haven't been in better shape over the last 200 years, period," says Joe Davis, the chief economist at fund giant Vanguard.

And there's no ignoring the economic recovery. The economy was shrinking at almost a 5 percent annual rate when stocks bottomed in 2009. Now it's growing at almost a 3 percent pace. Businesses added 222,000 jobs in February, the most since April 2010, and unemployment has fallen almost a full percentage point in three months.

"The economy is absolutely justifying what is happening in the stock market," says Liz Ann Sonders, an investment strategist at Charles Schwab.

Some investors say there isn't a bubble yet but worry that the market is in the first stages of inflating one. Rob Arnott, the founder of investment firm Research Affliates, thinks the stock market is "dangerously" overpriced. He points to Apple, which has a $321 billion market value, making it the second-largest company in the world behind Exxon Mobil. By revenue, profits or payouts to investors, however, Apple fails to crack the top 20, Arnott says.

"They have wonderful products and a finger on the pulse of the consumer like nobody else," Arnott says. "But the second-largest on the planet must mean Apple is the second-largest source of profits. Boy, that's a stretch."

Judged by other measures of value, the companies that make up the S&P 500 look rich. Investors are paying 24 times inflation-adjusted earnings over the last decade. The historical average is 16. That ratio could climb if people push stock prices higher because they expect earnings to catch up. But Arnott believes people are already underestimating larger problems ahead. The U.S. government's $14 trillion in debt and a greater share of the work force hitting retirement are both bound to drag down economic growth. "That's quite a hurricane," he says.

Legendary investor Jeremy Grantham, chief investment strategist of GMO, has a knack for timing. In a letter to investors released in early March 2009, Grantham argued it was impossible to declare a bottom in the stock market but said its steep drop was reason enough to jump back in. He predicted that the combined efforts of the Fed and government spending would spur a stock rally "far in excess of anything justified by either long-term or short-term fundamentals."

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Official: GCC weighing 'stability' fund

CAIRO (AP)—Gulf Arab officials are considering setting up a fund that would help Bahrain and Oman deal with some of the economic issues that have helped stoke unrest in those two nations, an official with the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council said Sunday. GCC finance ministers had met a day earlier in the Saudi Arabian capital and expectations were that they would announce what officials, ahead of that gathering, had described as a Gulf "Marshall Plan" to help Manama and Muscat. The plan called for a hefty financial contribution by the four wealthier GCC member states that would target key economic issues such as a housing shortage and unemployment. The financial boost is seen as pivotal for Bahrain and Oman, whose concurrent protests have brought the unrest that has thrown the Arab world into unprecedented turmoil right to Saudi Arabia's doorstep. It also threatens to test the durability of the region's monarchies, with nascent calls for demonstrations focusing largely on greater accountability by the rulers and a more direct political participation in government by the people.

Cameron unveils plan to boost growth in Britain

LONDON (AP)—Prime Minister David Cameron pledged Sunday to cut taxes and bureaucratic red tape to encourage business and growth in Britain. The government will take on "the enemies of enterprise" in its budget due later this month, Cameron said, insisting that encouraging enterprise by eliminating bureaucratic hurdles is the only way forward for a country struggling to recover from recession. "Someone joked to me the other day that the biggest growth industry in Britain this past decade has been the people writing the rules," Cameron told attendees gathered for the second day of Conservative Party conference in Wales. "But actually it's no joke."Britain is facing 80 billion pounds ($130 billion) of public spending cuts from Cameron's coalition government as it struggles to get the country's large budget deficit under control. The government has already raised sales tax, but cuts on services like welfare and a rise in the retirement age are yet to come.

China promises sweeping economic change

BEIJING (AP)—China's government is promising an economic overhaul that would raise the status of consumers and entrepreneurs but has given no sign how it will tackle its politically volatile reforms.

Beijing wants to nurture self-sustaining growth driven by consumption and develop service and high-tech industries, Premier Wen Jiabao said in a weekend speech outlining goals for 2011. That will require reining in elite state industry and other changes that might trigger a backlash within the party—hurdles Wen avoided mentioning.

"It looks great on the surface but it isn't clear whether they have the political capital or will to push through those changes," said Alistair Thornton, China analyst for IHS Global Insight.

Changes outlined by Wen could drive the evolution of the world's second-largest economy from low-cost factory into major consumer market. That might help to narrow a yawning wealth gap between China's elite and its poor majority and ease tensions over its trade surplus by boosting consumer demand for imports.

But to achieve its goals, Beijing has to cut subsidies and low-cost bank loans to state companies, real estate developers and other vested interests that have allies in the Communist Party and might fight back.

Wen promised unspecified "interest rate reforms"—a suggestion Beijing might give entrepreneurs a more level playing field by allowing the market to set interest rates—but he gave no timeline. The government has announced similar changes in past years but done little toward carrying them out.

The government also will have to clamp down on growth driven by investment, which might alienate local leaders whose development plans call for more spending on new factories and public works.

The plan is in line with goals approved by communist leaders in a five-year development plan in October. It calls for shifting from the investment- and export-led growth of China's three-decade-old boom to promote efficiency and household spending.

Wen said Beijing will encourage consumer spending, including giving subsidies to the rural poor to buy home appliances.

Judge to weigh rival plans in Trib bankruptcy case

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE
AP BUSINESS WRITER

A two-week hearing begins Monday to determine the fate of Tribune Co. more than two years after an ill-advised $8.2 billion buyout drove one of the oldest U.S. media companies into bankruptcy protection.

The proceedings follow four years of tumult and intrigue at Tribune Co. The company has been through the disgrace of a bankruptcy case that has lasted far longer than planned, a CEO departure triggered by complaints about management's raunchiness and the whiff of a financial scandal fanned by a court-appointed examiner's conclusion that parts of the 2007 buyout had bordered on fraud.

The hearing in U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Wilmington, Del., will affect the ownership of the Los Angeles Times, the Chicago Tribune, The Sun of Baltimore, other daily newspapers and 23 television stations. The TV stations include Chicago-based WGN, which reaches more than 70 million homes nationwide, mostly through cable and satellite systems.

The hearing edges Tribune Co. closer toward shedding most of the roughly $13 billion that it carried into bankruptcy protection. If it can unload the debt, the company believes it can make money while it tries to adapt to a marketing shift to the Internet.

Judge Kevin Carey is being asked to choose between two competing reorganization plans. The plans differ in their appraisals of Tribune Co.'s current value and their limitations on which participants in the troublesome buyout can be sued for saddling the company with too much debt.

Either way, the outcome is likely to leave Tribune Co. controlled by its creditors. The new owners are expected to replace the patchwork management team that has been running the Chicago-based company since the previous CEO, Randy Michaels, resigned in October amid complaints about risque conduct.

Nation

White House praises Muslims ahead of House hearing

STERLING, Va. (AP)—The White House on Sunday praised American Muslims for helping fight violent extremism, but a House leader on terrorism issues said they aren't cooperating enough with law enforcement to counter the radicalization of young followers by al-Qaida-linked groups.

Deputy National Security Adviser Denis McDonough, speaking at an interfaith forum at a Northern Virginia mosque, commended its members for taking "an unequivocal stand against terrorism."

"You've sent a message that those who perpetrate such horrific attacks do not represent you or your faith, and that they will not succeed in pitting believers of different faiths against one another," McDonough said.

But Rep. Peter King, chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, re-asserted warnings about al-Qaida terrorists targeting Muslim youth in this country.

"The overwhelming majority of Muslims are outstanding Americans, but at this stage in our history there's an effort ... to radicalize elements within the Muslim community," he said in a preview of his hearing Thursday on the extent of the problem and the Muslim community's response.

"It's there and that's where the threat is coming from at this time," King said in an interview broadcast Sunday.

"I don't believe there is sufficient cooperation" by American Muslims with law enforcement, King said. "Certainly my dealings with the police in New York and FBI and others say they do not believe they get the same—they do not give the level of cooperation that they need."

In New York City, a coalition of over 100 interfaith, nonprofit and governmental organizations planned a rally Sunday against King's hearing, saying it will send the wrong message to U.S. Muslims by "demonizing" them. The committee hasn't released a witness list yet for the hearing.

The administration has tried to strike a balance on the thorny issue, working to go after homegrown Islamic extremists without appearing to be at war with the Muslim world. There has been an effort to build stronger relationships with Muslims—internationally and with Islamic leaders in the United States.

At the same time, however, militant Islamic propaganda has factored into recent terrorist attacks and foiled attempts in this country.

Maj. Nidal Hasan, the suspect in 2009 shootings at Fort Hood, Texas, is believed to have been inspired by the Internet postings of violent Islamic extremists, as was Faisal Shahzad, who pleaded guilty to terrorism and weapons charges in the attempted car bombing in New York's Times Square.

AP

Jame McJunkin, assistant director from the FBI Washington field office, attends a meeting of all faiths at the All Dulles Area Muslim Society mosque in Sterling, Va., Sunday, March 6, 2011.

The first Muslim elected to the House, Rep. Keith Ellison, said that while it's proper to investigate radicalization, he thinks it is wrong to single out one religion.

"To say we're going to investigate a religious minority, and a particular one, I think is the wrong course of action to take," said Ellison, D-Minn. "I don't want them to be able to stand up and claim, you know, see, we told you, America is at war with Islam. That's one of their main recruiting arguments."

Ellison said Congress needs to be careful about how it addresses the issue in investigative hearings. Appearing with King on CNN's "State of the Union," he said it makes sense to speak with people in the Muslim community about efforts by extremists such as radical cleric Anwar al-Awlaki to encourage Muslims to wage attacks against the U.S.

But Ellison argued that Muslim-Americans have worked with authorities to report suspected terrorists within their community. It's important, he said, to engage Muslims, not frighten them.

Shortly after he took office, Obama pledged a new beginning in the U.S. relationship with the Muslim world. His national security strategy dropped rhetorical references to Islamic radicalism as Obama argued that words matter and such inflammatory language linking Islam to the terrorist threat feeds al-Qaida propaganda and could alienate moderate Muslims.

Others, however, say the administration is failing to clearly articulate the threat, and should more directly identify Islamic extremism as a root cause of terrorism.

"It's an international movement with elements here in the United States, and to me, that's a real distinction," King said. "There's always going to be isolated incidents, isolated fanatics, isolated terrorists even. But an organized terrorist effort, to me, is different, which requires an investigation unto itself."

The site for McDonough's speech was the All Dulles Area Muslim Society, one of the largest Muslim communities-mosque in the U.S., with seven branches serving more than 5,000 families, according to its website.

It is an outreach partner of the FBI and its executive director is a member of the Homeland Security Advisory Council's Countering Violent Extremism Working Group.

Farewells for 2 space crews and for Discovery

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP)—The space shuttle and space station crews hugged goodbye Sunday after more than a week together, but saved their most heartfelt farewell for Discovery.

On its final voyage after nearly three decades, Discovery, the most traveled rocketship ever, will be retired following this week's return to Earth.

The hatches between Discovery and the International Space Station were sealed Sunday afternoon, setting the stage for the shuttle's departure first thing Monday.

"We're going to miss you," the space station's commander, Scott Kelly, told the six shuttle astronauts. "But most of all we're going to miss Discovery.

"Discovery has been a great ship and has really supported the International Space Station more so, I think, than any other space shuttle. We wish her fair winds and following seas."

Shuttle skipper Steven Lindsey nodded in agreement, then shook hands with Kelly. Lindsey noted that all the mission objectives had been accomplished: The new storage unit carried up by Discovery was installed and unloaded, leaving behind an empty, pristine compartment ready to serve its purpose.

Lead flight director Royce Renfrew radioed up congratulations to the two crews, before the hatches slammed shut. He said he was "really proud to take Discovery home at the very top of her game," and he credited the astronauts in large part. "You guys rock," he said.

Mission Control gave Discovery's astronauts two extra days at the orbiting outpost. They took advantage of the bonus time to empty the storage unit of all the gear that went up inside it. The bonus days stretched the entire mission to 13 days on top of the 352 days already logged during Discovery's previous 38 missions.

In their last hour together, the 12 astronauts amused themselves in the new 21-foot-long, 15-foot-wide storage compartment. Taking turns a few at a time, they performed somersaults in the center of the chamber, bounced off the walls, and floated through with outstretched arms like underwater swimmers.

The astronauts were having so much fun that Mission Control was sorry to interrupt. "I hate to ring the recess bell on you," Mission Control radioed, reminding the shuttle crew of one last job remaining before the hatches needed to be shut.

Immediately after undocking, Discovery will fly a victory lap of sorts around the orbiting lab, essentially for picture-taking. Then the shuttle astronauts will pull out an inspection boom and survey their ship for any signs of micrometeorite damage.

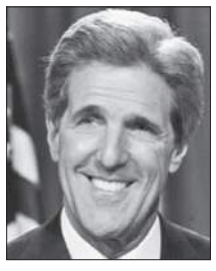
Landing is scheduled for Wednesday.

Kerry: Prepare but don't yet implement no-fly zone

WASHINGTON (AP)—The U.S. and its allies should plan for a no-fly zone over Libya and consider bombing the country's airports and runways, but they should take no action unless there is an international agreement, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee said Sunday,

Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., and other lawmakers continued a drumbeat for military action in Libya, in the face of reluctance from the White House and U.S. defense officials, who argue that taking out Libya's air defenses would be tantamount to going to war.

"Lots of people throw around phrases of `no-fly zone' and they talk about it as though it's just a game, a video game or something. Some people who throw that line out have no idea what they're talking about," White House chief of staff William Daley said.



Kerry

The administration has said that all options are on the table but that any military action must be an international effort. Pentagon chief Robert Gates cautioned last week that an attack on Libya could drag the U.S. military into another conflict, even as nearly 150,000 troops continue to battle in Afghanistan and Iraq.

British Defense Minister Liam Fox on Sunday said that any talks about establishing a no-fly zone over Libya are at "the early stage of contingency planning." Fox told BBC radio that more details will be discussed by NATO defense leaders at a meeting in Brussels later this week. Gates is scheduled to attend that meeting.

Fox also insisted "there was no and there is no plan to use British land forces" in Libya.

The U.S. debate continued as the North African nation appeared to slide toward civil war, with Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi's forces in helicopters and on the ground firing on rebel fighters advancing on the capital.

ACROSS THE NATION

Nevada mine death: Questions on called-off rescue

RENO, Nev. (AP)—A worker plunges deep into an abandoned mine shaft. Nearly 200 feet down, video images show he is injured but still breathing, trapped by debris. The century-old shaft, though, is extremely unstable, its walls crumbling. As one rescuer tries to descend to reach the man, he is hit by a large rock, which splits his hard-hat. Other efforts yield more falling rocks and clear evidence: This is going to be a dangerous mission—maybe too dangerous. The scenario unfolded underneath Nevada last week, when rescue teams were told to stand down in their bid to reach Devin Westenskow, a 28-year-old father of five, even as they had evidence he was still alive.

Pa. man accused of stabbing parents, twin to death

KING OF PRUSSIA, Pa. (AP)—A 23-year-old man was charged with first-degree murder in the weekend stabbing deaths of his parents and twin brother, said police, who found a Samurai-style sword covered in blood at the scene and said the suspect referred to the deaths as "extermination." Police in Upper Merion Township, outside Philadelphia, found the bodies of Joseph McAndrew, 70, Susan McAndrew, 64, and James McAndrew, 23, in the kitchen of their home Saturday night, the Times Herald of Norristown reported. All three had multiple cuts and lacerations, and authorities recovered several knives and the sword from the home, police said.

Police: Body likely belongs to missing Nevada girl

WEST WENDOVER, Nev. (AP)—A Nevada police chief says a body found in a shallow grave in the desert near the Utah border is likely that of a teenager who went missing while walking home from her high school last week. West Wendover police chief Ron Supp tells KSL-TV of Salt Lake City that authorities believe the body belongs to 16-year-old Micaela "Mickey" Costanzo. She disappeared from the Nevada gambling town on Thursday. More than 100 volunteers helped search for Costanzo on Saturday. A searcher discovered the freshly dug grave about five miles west of the town, and police set up tents and worked at the site on Sunday.

Asia

Philippine leader vows punishment in graft scandal

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—President Benigno Aquino III vowed Sunday to punish officers linked to a high-profile corruption scandal and ordered a new military chief to make reforms aimed at halting large-scale graft in one of Asia's weakest militaries.

Aquino used a speech at a graduation ceremony at the prestigious Philippine Military Academy—traditionally focused on anti-insurgency and national security issues—to admonish the 196 graduating cadets to resist graft.

"I hope you can say `no' when somebody dumps a truckload of money in front of you," Aquino said to loud applause at the academy, patterned after the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. "You're here not to get rich."

Corruption, long entrenched in Philippine society, is an especially explosive issue in the ill-equipped and poorly paid 126,000-strong military and has sparked several insurrections by disgruntled troops in the last two decades. Soldiers have been struggling with a dearth of weapons while battling communist and Muslim rebels and al-Qaida-linked extremists.

A new scandal broke out in January when a former military budget officer testified before the Philippine Senate that at least three retired military chiefs of staff pocketed huge amounts of money siphoned off from budgets for troop salaries, weapons, intelligence and a military hospital.

One of the accused, Gen. Angelo Reyes, denied the allegation but committed suicide at his mother's grave last month as the Senate investigation continued.

Aquino, who won a landslide election victory last year on a promise to battle corruption and poverty, told the cadets at the academy in northern Baguio city that corruption flourished in the past because it was tolerated.

AP

Philippine President Benigno Aquino III, second from left, stands in front of military officials following a command conference at Camp Aguinaldo in suburban Quezon City, north of Manila, Philippines on Wednesday, Feb. 16, 2011.

Aquino said some officers openly enjoyed lavish lifestyles, splurging on foreign trips with their wives.

"We'll have these robbers and their cohorts pay for their crimes," he said. "Nobody will be spared."

Aquino said his anti-corruption campaign has raised funds that allowed the government to finance 20,000 low-cost houses for soldiers and police officers this year.

He also announced that retiring military chief of staff Gen. Ricardo David Jr. will be succeeded this week by Eduardo Oban Jr., a three-star air force general without extensive combat experience but whose name has not been tainted by graft scandals.

Aquino ordered Oban to press on with reforms aimed at curbing graft, promoting human rights and bolstering talks with insurgents.

Leading a military hounded by corruption controversies "is a big challenge," said Oban, who assumes his post Monday.

Oban told the ABS-CBN TV network that he would review the handling of the military's finances, including procurement.

Japanese foreign minister quits over illegal donation

TOKYO (AP)—Japan's foreign minister suddenly quit Sunday for having accepted a political donation from a foreigner—a violation of Japanese law—dealing another blow to the embattled administration of Prime Minister Naoto Kan.

Seiji Maehara, 48, was foreign minister for just six months, and was viewed as a leading candidate to succeed Kan.

Maehara acknowledged receiving a total of 250,000 yen ($3,000) over the past several years from a 72-year-old Korean woman who has lived most of her life in Japan. He said they had been friends since his childhood.

Japanese law makes it very hard for foreigners to become citizens, even if their families have lived in the country for generations. The foreign residents include hundreds of thousands of ethnic Koreans, many descended from laborers brought forcibly to Japan during World War II.

Japan's political funding law prohibits lawmakers from accepting donations from any foreigners, even those born in Japan.

Maehara's resignation at a televised news conference Sunday night furthers the high turnover that has plagued government officials in recent years and is likely to further erode public confidence in Kan—the country's fifth leader in four years—whose public approval rating has fallen below 20 percent.

Japanese have grown disillusioned over the government's inability to move ahead in tackling serious problems, from a lackluster economy and bulging national debt to an aging, shrinking population.

"I apologize to the people that I ended up resigning after just six months on the job, and for causing distrust due to a politics-and-money problem despite my pledge to seek clean politics," Maehara said, bowing. "It's truly regrettable that I caused such a problem because of my own mistake."

His admission undermines Kan's pledge to root out "money politics" after a veteran power broker in the ruling Democratic Party of Japan, Ichiro Ozawa, was ensnared in a political funding scandal. Ozawa says he is innocent, but the party has recommended revoking his membership.

Opposition parties, which have worked hard to obstruct the Democrats' attempts to pass the budget and move ahead on other legislation, will likely be emboldened by Maehara's resignation.

Maehara did not say who would succeed him.

Atsuo Ito, an independent political analyst, said the resignation was inevitable to save Kan's government from further trouble.

"If he had stayed on, he would have come under heavy fire in parliament," he said in an interview with Fuji TV.

Afghan president rejects US apology over killings

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—Afghanistan's president on Sunday rejected a U.S. apology for the mistaken killing of nine Afghan boys in a NATO air attack and said civilian casualties are no longer acceptable.

According to a statement from his office, Hamid Karzai told Gen. David Petraeus, the top commander of coalition forces in Afghanistan, that expressing regret was not sufficient in last week's killing of the boys, ages 12 and under, by coalition helicopters.

NATO has also apologized for the mistaken killings. Civilian casualties from coalition operations are a major source of strain in the already difficult relationship between Karzai's government and the United States, and they generate widespread outrage among the population.

"President Karzai said that only regret is not sufficient and also mentioned that civilian casualties during military operations by coalition forces is the main reason for tension in relations between Afghanistan and United States," the statement said. "It is not acceptable for the Afghan people anymore. Regrets and condemnations of the incident cannot heal the wounds of the people."

The killing of the nine boys took place on March 1 in the Pech valley area of Kunar province in eastern Afghanistan.

Lt. Gen. David Rodriguez, who directs day-to-day operations of coalition forces across Afghanistan, later issued a video statement of apology.

In the video, Rodriguez said troops at a base in the valley were responding to a rocket attack and dispatched attack helicopters to the location they were told the rockets came from. He said the helicopters thought they were engaging insurgents, but it later turned out they were boys from a nearby village who were cutting firewood.

Karzai appealed to Petraeus to do more to prevent such incidents. He made the remarks to Petraeus during a Sunday meeting of the National Security Council, a body that includes Cabinet members and senior political and military officials.

According to the statement, Petraeus said during the meeting that the killing was a mistake by coalition forces and extended his condolences and regret to Karzai and the Afghan people, promising that such an incident will not be repeated.

"President Karzai said that repetition of such incidents would affect relations and the environment of trust between us. The continuation of such incidents is not tolerable and not acceptable for the Afghan people and government," the statement said.

NATO operations against insurgents in eastern Afghanistan have caused friction with the Karzai administration in recent weeks after government charges that the military has caused a number of civilian deaths and casualties.

Last week, Karzai warned President Barack Obama in a video conference call that U.S.-led forces must do a better job addressing civilian casualties.

Earlier this month, the Karzai administration claimed that 65 civilians, including 40 children, were killed in a NATO assault on insurgents in Kunar. NATO has said that video of Kunar operations on Feb. 17—the main event of more than three days of fighting—showed troops targeting and killing dozens of insurgents, not civilians.

Civilian deaths have jumped this year primarily because of increased attacks from insurgents, according to U.N. data. Insurgents recently have started carrying out indiscriminate attacks against soft targets such as banks, supermarkets and sporting events.

But allegations of civilian deaths from NATO forces—who pledge to protect the population—often cause much more anger.

Hundreds of people from a left-wing political party marched through Kabul to protest U.S. military operations and demanded the withdrawal of foreign troops.

ASIAN BRIEFS

India successfully tests interceptor missile

NEW DELHI (AP)—India's defense ministry said it successfully shot down a missile Sunday in a test of a homegrown missile interception system. The interceptor missile destroyed a medium-range missile over the Bay of Bengal after the missile had been fired from a test site in the eastern state of Orissa, ministry spokesman Sitanshu Kar said. "It hit the target missile at an altitude of about 10 miles (16 kilometers)," Kar said. A test of the system last March was unsuccessful, with the interceptor missile failing to take off. Sunday's exercise tested the system's ability to track, intercept and destroy incoming missiles and was part of a series of trials, he said.

Suspected Thai insurgents kill 2, wound 5

PATTANI, Thailand (AP)—Police say suspected Muslim militants have fatally shot two people and wounded five in a spate of weekend violence in insurgency-plagued southern Thailand. Police Maj. Gen. Tuande Juthanant said six gunmen opened fire in a busy area of Pattan province's Yarang district Sunday and killed a retired police officer. Four bystanders were wounded. Two insurgents on a motorcycle also in Pattani shot at a mother and son riding a motorbike back from a market. The 23-year-old son died and the mother was wounded.

Court defers ruling on Nobel laureate's dismissal

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP)—Bangladesh's High Court has delayed its ruling on the legality of a government order dismissing Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus as head of the microfinance bank he founded, an official said Sunday. Attorney General Mahbub-e-Alam said the court is likely to rule Monday. Lawyers for Yunus made more arguments Sunday and presented documents arguing that his dismissal is illegal, Alam said. The government is to respond Monday. Bangladesh's central bank ordered Yunus out of Grameen Bank last Wednesday, saying he violated the country's retirement laws.

World

Libya forces try to halt rebel move toward capital

BIN JAWWAD, Libya (AP)—Forces loyal to Moammar Gadhafi, some in helicopter gunships, pounded opposition fighters with artillery, rockets and gunfire Sunday, dramatically escalating their counteroffensive to halt the rebels' rapid advance toward the capital.

They also battled to loosen the grip of rebels on two cities close to Tripoli. But in at least one case, their tactics appeared to lead them into a trap. Residents said pro-Gadhafi troops punched into the city of Misrata, 120 miles (200 kilometers) east of Tripoli, the capital, with mortars and tanks but were pushed out five hours later by rebel forces. The rebel commanders intentionally opened the way for government tanks to enter the city, then surrounded them and attacked with anti-aircraft guns and mortars, said Abdel Fatah al-Misrati, one of the rebels. "Our spirits are high," al-Misrati said. "The regime is struggling and what is happening is a desperate attempt to survive and crush the opposition. But the rebels are in control of the city."

As fighting across Libya grew more fierce, the international community appeared to be struggling to put military muscle behind its demands for Gadhafi to give up power.

A small British delegation sent to talk to the rebels headquartered in the main eastern city of Benghazi, meanwhile, was arrested by the rebels themselves, who said the group had entered the country without permission. The rebels have set up an interim governing council that is urging international airstrikes on Gadhafi's strongholds and forces, though they strongly oppose foreign intervention on the ground.

Sunday's fighting appeared to signal the start of a new phase in the conflict, with Gadhafi's regime unleashing its air power on the rebel force trying to oust the ruler of 41 years. Resorting to heavy use of air attacks signaled the regime's concern that it needed to check the advance of the rebel force toward the city of Sirte—Gadhafi's hometown and stronghold.

Anti-Gadhafi forces would get a massive morale boost if they captured Sirte, and it would clear a major obstacle on the march toward the gates of Tripoli.

The uprising against Gadhafi, which began Feb. 15, is already longer and much bloodier than the relatively quick revolts that overthrew the longtime authoritarian leaders of neighboring Egypt and Tunisia.

Libya appears to be sliding toward a civil war that could drag out for weeks, or even months. Both sides seem to be relatively weak and poorly trained, though Gadhafi's forces have the advantage in numbers and equipment. The conflict took a turn late last week when government opponents, backed by mutinous army units and armed with weaponry seized from storehouses, went on the offensive. At the same time, pro-Gadhafi forces have conducted counteroffensives to try to retake the towns and oil ports the rebels have captured since they moved out of the rebel-held east.

An opposition force estimated at 500 to 1,000 fighters pushed out of the rebel-held eastern half of Libya and has been cutting a path west toward Tripoli. On the way, they secured control of two important oil ports at Brega and Ras Lanouf.

If the rebels continue to advance, even slowly, Gadhafi's heavy dependence on air power could prompt the West to try to hurriedly enforce a no-fly zone over the country. The U.N. has already imposed sanctions against Libya, and the U.S. has moved military forces closer to its shores to back up its demand that Gadhafi step down.

Enforcing a no-fly zone could take weeks to organize, however, and U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates has noted that it must be preceded by a military operation to take out Libya's air defenses. British Foreign Minister William Hague said Sunday that a no-fly zone over Libya is still in an early stage of planning and ruled out the use of ground forces.

Hague also said a small British diplomatic team sent to Libya to try to talk to the rebels left after it "experienced difficulties," but that another team would be sent. He told the BBC it would be inappropriate to comment on an article in Britain's Sunday Times that soldiers were captured by rebel forces when a secret mission to put British diplomats in touch with leading opponents of Gadhafi went awry.

Abdel-Hafidh Ghoga, spokesman for the rebels' provisional transitional national council, said eight people with British passports were arrested, including one who claimed to be a British diplomat. He said their departure was being arranged, and that they have "probably already left."

"The reason they were arrested is because they came into the country unofficially without previous arrangement with Libyan officials. Libya is an independent nation, and we have our borders that we expect to be respected," Ghoga said.

He added that there is "no crisis" between the council and Britain and that anti-Gadhafi forces are "more than willing" to talk to any delegation sent "in a legitimate way."

Hundreds if not thousands of people have died since Libya's uprising began Feb. 15—tight restrictions on media make it near impossible to get an accurate tally. More than 200,000 people have fled the country, most of them foreign workers. The exodus is creating a humanitarian crisis across the border with Tunisia—another North African country in turmoil after an uprising in January that ousted its longtime leader.

The turmoil is being felt more broadly still in the form of rising oil prices. Libya's oil production has been seriously crippled by the unrest.

On Saturday night, the rebels pushed to just 20 miles (30 kilometers) east of Sirte, but then pulled back about 90 miles (150 kilometers) to the town of Ras Lanouf for the night.

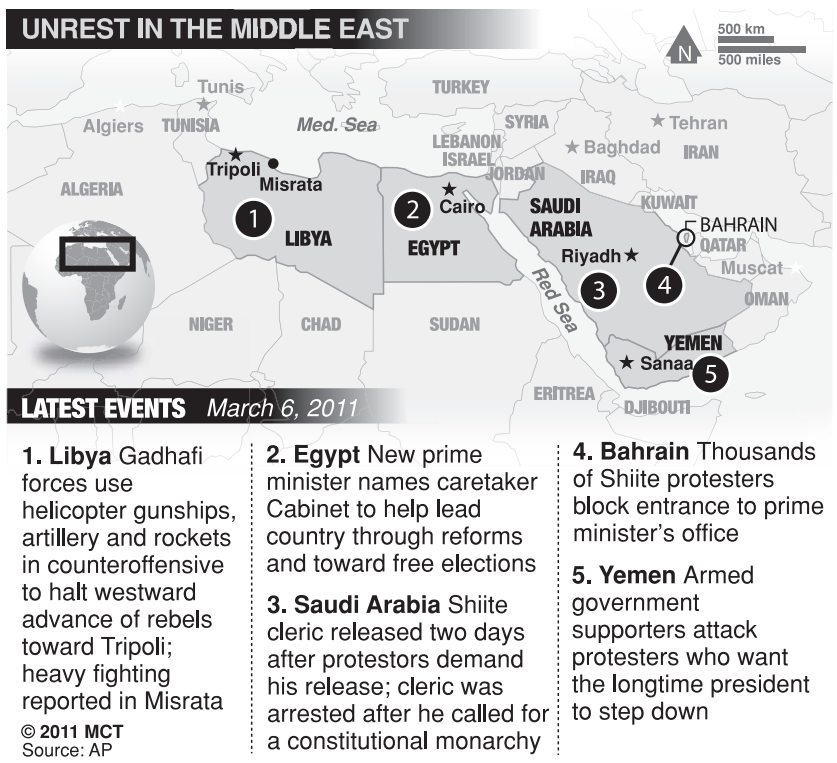
That night, pro-Gadhafi forces infiltrated the town of Bin Jawwad, on the road to Sirte, and set an ambush for the rebel forces when they returned at daylight. They also came under a barrage of fire from helicopter gunships, artillery and rockets. Associated Press reporters at the scene saw fierce battles raging throughout the day.

"We got thrown by bombs and snipers from the side roads that we can't see," recalled Jamal al-Karrari, a Libyan who abandoned his studies in the U.S. to join the uprising. "I didn't even use my Kalashnikov; I didn't find a target. All we were trying to do was escape and come back."

The rebels staged several offensives throughout the day, while unarmed spectators, many decorated with the rebel flag, cheered them on from the road. Each advance, however, was met with a withering barrage of cannon fire that threw the rebels back. The government also launched airstrikes against Ras Lanouf.

About 50 rebel fighters were trapped inside a Bin Jawwad mosque, and their comrades who had retreated to the edge of the city suddenly surged forward in 20 pickup trucks to try to rescue them. They drove straight into the bombardment and one of the trucks was hit, sending a huge plume of black smoke into the air. The rest of the convoy quickly retreated back to the edges of the town.

An anti-Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi rebel, left, stands next to his injured colleague who receives treatment from an ambulance worker after he was wounded during a fight against pro-Gadhafi fighters near the town of Bin-Jawad, eastern Libya, Sunday, March 6, 2011. AP



WORLD BRIEFS

Shiite protesters in Bahrain besiege PM office

MANAMA, Bahrain (AP)—Thousands of Shiite opposition supporters blocked the entrance to the Bahraini prime minister's office but failed to disrupt a government meeting on Sunday as the campaign for reform in the strategic Gulf nation entered its third week. Bahrain's Shiite majority has long complained of discrimination and political persecution in the island nation, which is ruled by a Sunni dynasty. The protesters demanded the prime minister step down because of corruption and a deadly crackdown on the opposition in which seven people were killed. Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, the prime minister and the king's uncle, has been in power for 40 years.

Magnitude-6.2 earthquake shakes northern Chile

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP)—A magnitude-6.2 earthquake on Sunday shook a northern region of Chile that has felt several frightening but inconsequential tremors in recent days. No injuries and only minor damage were reported. The quake was centered in Putre, about 40 miles (60 kilometers) east of the port of Arica near the border with Peru, and nearly 1,400 miles (2,200 kilometers) north of the capital, Santiago, the U.S. Geological Survey said. The quake happened about 9:30 a.m. and had a depth of about 70 miles (110 kilometers), the agency said.

Haiti's Carnival resumes amid capital's ruins

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP)—Raucous crowds danced in the streets of the Haitian capital Sunday as the city celebrated its first Carnival since last year's devastating earthquake forced the cancellation of the annual festivities. The parade filed past the ruined facades of downtown shops, and the normally busy boulevard outside the collapsed National Palace was turned into a pedestrian zone for three days of revelry. Organizers erected a plywood wall to separate the Carnival zone from the huge Champ de Mars plaza, now a camp for tens of thousands of people made homeless by the quake. Many spectators grumbled that Carnival was much smaller than in the past. Others said the city had no busy holding the celebration at all.

Focus

China challenges US predominance in Asia-Pacific

By MATTHEW PENNINGTON
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Editor's Note: This is part of an occasional series by The Associated Press on the emerging U.S.-China military rivalry in the Pacific.

WASHINGTON (AP)—Fifteen years ago, when China launched threatening war games off Taiwan on the eve of an election on the self-governing island, the U.S. deployed two aircraft carriers, and China quickly backed down.

Things don't seem so one-sided any more.

China's military has been on a spending spree at a time that the debt-ridden U.S. government is looking to cut defense costs. On Friday, China announced a 12.7 percent hike for this year, the latest in a string of double-digit increases.

That trend has triggered worries in Congress and among security analysts about whether America can maintain its decades-long military predominance in the economically crucial Asia-Pacific.

While the U.S. military has been drained by 10 years of costly conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, China has developed air, naval and missile capabilities that could undercut America's superiority in China's backyard.

China is still decades away from building a military as strong as America's. It has not fought a major conflict since a border war with Vietnam in 1979 and is not a Soviet-style rival threatening American soil.

But the shift in the militaries raises questions about whether the U.S. can meet its commitment to maintain a strong presence in the Asia-Pacific for decades—a matter not just of global prestige but also seen as critical for safeguarding shipping lanes vital for world trade and protecting allies.

China already has an innate geographical advantage in any conflict in the west Pacific. One expert posits that with its military buildup, China could conquer Taiwan by the end of the decade even if the U.S. military intervened.

China regards Taiwan as part of its territory. Relations between the two, long seen as a potential flash point, have in fact warmed in the past two years. But China's assertion of territorial claims in the South China Sea, which it has declared as a "core interest"—essentially something it could go to war over—has spooked its neighbors and fortified their support for a strong U.S. presence in the region. Even former enemy Vietnam is forging military ties with the U.S.

Last week, the Philippines deployed two warplanes after a ship searching for oil complained it was harassed by two Chinese patrol boats in the South China Sea. Japan scrambled F-15 fighter jets after Chinese surveillance and anti-submarine aircraft flew near disputed islands in the East China Sea.

"As China's military has gotten more capable and China has behaved more aggressively, a number of countries are looking at the U.S. as a hedge to make sure they can maintain independence, security and stability," said Abraham Denmark, director of the Asia-Pacific Security Program at the Center for a New American Security.

> **"As China's military has gotten more capable and China has behaved more aggressively, a number of countries are looking at the U.S. as a hedge to make sure they can maintain independence, security and stability."**

But those allies question whether the U.S. can retain its freedom to operate in the region, and whether its economy—highly indebted to China and struggling to recover from a recession—can sustain its high level of military spending, said Bonnie Glaser, a China expert at the Center of Strategic and International Studies think tank.

The U.S. Pacific Command has 325,000 personnel, five aircraft carrier strike groups, 180 ships and nearly 2,000 aircraft. Tens of thousands of forces stay at long-established bases in South Korea and Japan, on China's doorstep.

China's defense spending is still dwarfed by America's. Even if China really invests twice as much in its military as its official $91.5 billion budget, which some analysts believe, that is still only about a quarter of U.S. spending. It has no aircraft carriers and lags the U.S. in defense technology. Some of its most vaunted recent military advances will take years to reach operation.

For example, China test flew its stealth fighter in January, months earlier than U.S. intelligence expected, but U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates says China will still only have a couple of hundred of these "fifth-generation" jets by 2025, when America should have 1,500.

But China's growing array of aircraft, naval and submarine vessels, ballistic and cruise missiles, anti-satellite and cyber war capabilities already enable it to project power beyond its shores. It plans new submarines, larger naval destroyers and transport aircraft that could expand that reach further.

Roger Cliff, a respected defense researcher who recently testified before a congressional hearing on China, says many of the missiles and strike aircraft have a range of about 900 miles (1,500 kilometers), which put them within attacking distance of virtually all U.S. air and naval bases in the region. They include the DF-21D missile which is designed to target aircraft carriers. It employs technology that no other U.S. rival has mastered. It does not appear to have been tested yet against a maneuvering target at sea.

Cliff said if trends continue, by the end of the decade China should have sufficient missiles and precision bombs to render inoperable for a week or more all airfields on Taiwan and U.S. air bases in Okinawa, Japan, and possibly others farther away. He said there are between 40 and 50 Chinese air bases within 500 miles (800 kilometers) of Taiwan, each generally hosting a squadron of 24 aircraft, that could overwhelm superior U.S. aircraft through sheer numbers. If China acquired amphibious landing vehicles, he forecast it could conquer Taiwan.

If U.S. military planners are worried about that possibility, they aren't showing it. They say plans to cap defense spending within five years won't derail modernization plans. Pacific Command chief Adm. Robert Willard said last month that while the U.S. carefully watches China's growing military capabilities—and urges greater openness from China about them—America does not need to change its strategy.

China maintains it does not have offensive intentions, and analysts say that military action in the region would hurt its export-driven economy which could threaten what its government prizes above all else—domestic stability. The U.S. military presence may also benefit China as it restrains neighbors like South Korea and Japan from seeking nuclear weapons.

As U.S. and Chinese forces increasingly rub up against each other in the west Pacific, the U.S. says it wants to promote military ties between them to prevent a chance skirmish and for China to develop as a "responsible major power." To date, China has been reluctant to engage meaningfully after the recent restoration of military ties that were cut over U.S. arms sales to Taiwan.

"This is not the Cold War with two rival camps facing each other," said Michael Schiffer, U.S. deputy assistant secretary of defense for East Asia. "We are seeking a military-military relationship that is broad and deep enough to manage our differences while expanding on areas of common interest."

In this Nov. 30, 2010 file photo, U.S. Navy deck crew coordinate with U.S. Naval aviators of the F/A-18F Super Hornet fighter attack aircraft as they prepare to launch off the deck of the USS George Washington, during a joint military exercise off South Korea's West Sea, in South Korea's West Sea.

AP

Overdrive

2011 Hyundai Elantra a tough compact to follow

By MARK PHELAN
DETROIT FREE PRESS

I literally did a double-take when I read the price on the Elantra's window sticker. The print was the size of a box score, but I'd thought the compact sedan was a good deal when I misread the price by $3,000—$3,000 higher—on my first-glance scan.

The Elantra is one of the new breed of compacts with features you could only get on luxury cars until recently. It's also a surprising value, as the top-of-the-line Limited model I tested proved.

Prices for the 2011 Hyundai Elantra start at $14,830 for a base model with a 148-horsepower 1.8-liter four-cylinder engine and six-speed manual transmission. The 1.8-liter features direct fuel-injection and variable valve timing. It's the only engine available in the Elantra.

The least-expensive model with an automatic transmission goes for $17,080.

I tested a loaded Elantra Limited that stickered at $22,110. All prices exclude destination charges.

The Elantra's base price significantly undercuts other new compacts like the Chevrolet Cruze and Ford Focus. The margin narrows when you add the automatic transmission—as the vast majority of buyers almost certainly will. Option other compacts up to match the Elantra Limited I tested and watch their prices rise a couple of thousand dollars above the Hyundai.

The Elantra also competes with older compacts like the Honda Civic, Nissan Sentra and Toyota Corolla.

MCT

The 2011 Hyundai Elantra is one of the new breed of compacts with features you could only get on luxury cars until recently.

NUTS & BOLTS

Front-wheel drive compact sedan
Price as tested: $22,110 (excluding destination charge)
Rating: Three out of four stars
Reasons to buy: Fuel economy, value, looks
Shortcomings: Interior noise, iPod and hands-free phone compatibility

The Elantra's EPA fuel economy rating of 40 mpg becomes more impressive when you take a closer look at the competition. All Elantra models—from the $14,830 manual-transmission base to the loaded Limited I drove—have the same highway rating.

The Chevy Cruze Eco model scored an eye-popping 42 mpg on the highway, but that's only when equipped with a manual transmission, low rolling-resistance tires, an electronic shutter to close the grille and reduce aerodynamic drag, and other features. An Eco with automatic gearbox got 37 mpg in EPA tests, while the non-Eco Cruze got 35 and 36 mpg, respectively, with the manual and automatic.

Ford hasn't revealed EPA fuel economy ratings for the upcoming Focus yet, but its 40-mpg SFE model will rely on some of the same methods, including special tires and a shutter on the grille. Models without those gadgets will probably check in around 37 mpg.

The Elantra's fuel economy easily tops all non-hybrid models of the Civic, Corolla and Sentra.

The engine generates acceptable power, but gets noisy when accelerating fast and at highway speeds. Wind and road noise are very noticeable at highway speeds. The doors sound light and tinny when you shut them.

The Elantra has a roomy and comfortable passenger compartment and trunk. The interior is trimmed with good quality materials in tasteful colors. The dashboard and arm rests are padded. The instruments are very clear and legible.

The touch-screen panel and controls in the center stack for audio, climate, etc., are considerably simpler than Ford's fussy MyFordTouch system.

The voice-recognition system for hands-free phones is poor. Hyundai's management of CDs and iPods also needs work. Songs continue to play silently while you're on hands-free calls, and the car repeatedly shifted my iPod out of shuffle mode.

The Elantra's suspension cushions bumpy roads well. The electric power steering is very well tuned, providing good feedback and assist.

The Elantra's styling is consistent with the appealing look of recent Hyundais like the Sonata midsize sedan and Tucson crossover SUV. The theme that works so well on those bigger vehicles struck me as bit overdone on the smaller Elantra, though.

The 2011 Hyundai is long on value, comfort and features, however. It's the car other compacts should measure themselves against.

Don't like car dealer's price? Go elsewhere

By STEVEN COLE SMITH
THE ORLANDO SENTINEL

QUESTION: My son is thinking of buying a new sports car with a settlement he recently received. The dealer he is talking to wants to charge him $2,200 over the sticker price from the manufacturer. Is this not illegal? And if so, to whom should I report the dealer?—J.O., Orlando, Fla.

ANSWER: No one, because it isn't illegal. Auto dealers are independent. They essentially buy the inventory from the manufacturer, and sell it for whatever price they want—or can. The sticker price is the manufacturer's suggested retail price, or MSRP. That's all the manufacturer can do: suggest. Some discourage the practice of selling for more than the sticker price, which usually is reserved for brand-new models or limited editions, but they can't prevent it. Nor can they prevent you from shopping at another dealer.

I often get complaints about dealers selling for more than MSRP. No one ever complains when they sell for less than list price! It's worth noting that several online pricing services can tell you what a new vehicle is selling for on average. Edmunds.com., for instance, will give you the list price, plus what they call the "true market value," or what their research says consumers are actually spending for the car. I don't find it 100 percent accurate, but it's worth researching.

■■■

Q: My new pickup truck has a "capless" fuel filler. Is this safe?—Charlie Wood, Boca Raton, Fla.

A: Capless systems are used safely in most every form of automobile racing, and have been for years. They really aren't "capless"; there just isn't a cap that you have to remove and put back on. The assembly has a built-in cap that seals up as tight as a regular cap. In other words, yes, they are safe.

■■■

QUESTION: I'm very interested in the new technology in cars like the Nissan Leaf and Chevrolet Volt, and plan to buy one eventually, but I am also very confused. Fuel mileage is very important to me, and I don't understand the EPA ratings for both vehicles. The Leaf is all-electric, yet the EPA rates it at 99 miles per gallon. Per gallon of what? Electricity? Please explain.—William, Boca Raton, Fla.

ANSWER: As you can imagine, the Environmental Protection Agency's testing system has always been based on a petroleum-burning vehicle, which also worked reasonably well for regular hybrids. With the Volt, and especially the Leaf, the EPA was thrown for a loop. The EPA rates the Leaf with a mpg "equivalent" of 106 miles per gallon in the city, 92 highway, for a combined 99 mpg. How so? Because the EPA has calculated that 33.7 kilowatt hours of electricity is equivalent to one gallon of gasoline energy.

The EPA says the Leaf will go 73 miles on a single charge, which is much worse than I got when I test-drove the vehicle. As for the Volt, the EPA says it will go about 35 miles on pure electricity before the gasoline engine kicks in, which matches my tests. And its EPA rating even more confusing: The EPA rates the Volt at 93 mpg on pure electricity (using the aforementioned conversion formula), and 37 mpg on pure gasoline.

That's the explanation, and I'm sorry it's such a confusing one.

Steven Cole Smith is the automotive editor at the Orlando Sentinel in Florida. Send questions to scsmith@orlandosentinel.com.

Window defroster an easy fix

By BRAD BERGHOLDT
MCCLATCHY-TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

QUESTION: I just noticed my rear window defroster has a big gap in the middle that doesn't defrost. It's about 2 inches tall. I was told the window needs to be replaced to fix this, and it's really expensive. Is there a way to fix it?—Randy Yeargan

ANSWER: Yes, you should be able to fix the defroster, and at low cost. The inside surface of your rear window contains a delicate network of conductive stripes that have been silk-screened then baked onto the glass. A conductor on one side of the window receives voltage when the defroster is turned on, and another on the other side is connected to the vehicle body. Each stripe bridges between the two conductors and acts as an electrical resistor, giving off heat as electric current passes through it.

Rear window defroster stripes are easily damaged by people, pets or cargo. It doesn't take much to scratch or scrape a void in a stripe, creating an incomplete circuit, which results in a loss of heat in that area of the glass. Sometimes the entire window can fail to be heated if the fragile wire connections break away from the window conductors. That is more difficult to fix.

The first step in repairing bad stripes is to identify specifically which ones are faulty. During a frosty morning, look closely and note which stripes are inoperative. Next, when it's a more pleasant time to work, perform a close visual inspection of the troublesome stripes, from the inside, looking for damage. If you can't find any, an inexpensive automotive test light will be needed to find the exact spot to repair.

Next, pick up a defroster repair kit from your local auto parts store, along with that test light, if needed. The kit should cost about $15; Permatex is one company that makes them.

Let's look at the procedure for using the test light: Clip the test light's alligator clip to a bare metal vehicle part, such as a door or hatch latch striker. Now, with the ignition key turned to run/on, and the defroster switch on, gently touch a good stripe with the test light's pointy tip, about in the center of the window. You'll find the light glows dimly, which is a good thing, as that stripe is dropping voltage progressively across its length.

Now you're ready to go after the other stripes, and you'll see the difference. Touch the test light gently to each suspect stripe, in various spots across its length. You'll find the light glows brightly or not at all, depending on which side of the injury you touch. Keep probing until you find the exact spot where the light brightens or dims, and that's the place to fix. Be careful not to create new injuries with the test light's sharp tip—touch, don't sweep, the light along the stripe.

To make the repair, you'll apply masking tape to each side of the stripe and apply the repair product, which resembles thick paint, to the injured area. Follow the kit instructions regarding specific application method, cure time and tape removal, and you should be back in business.

Brad Bergholdt is an automotive technology instructor at Evergreen Valley College in San Jose, Calif. Readers may send him e-mail at under-the-hood@earthlink.net; he cannot make personal replies.

Life & Style

Prince Andrew woes a distraction as wedding nears

LONDON (AP)—Less than two months before a fairytale wedding anticipated by much of the world, Britain's royal family finds itself fighting an inconvenient distraction: revelations that Prince Andrew, the queen's second son, is friends with a convicted sex offender, was photographed with a teenage prostitute, and has been accused of ties to Moammar Gadhafi's Libyan regime.

The Duke of York also hosted the son of the Tunisian dictator shortly before a popular uprising drove him from power—and the buildup of embarrassment has sparked calls that he be stripped of his role as special U.K. trade representative.

Buckingham Palace is in damage control mode as it attempts to keep the public's focus on the April 29 wedding between Prince William and tabloid favorite Kate Middleton, his college sweetheart.

British officials have rallied to Andrew's defense. The foreign secretary expressed his "confidence" in Andrew on Sunday, and a U.K. trade official voiced support for the prince to remain in the position, saying he does a "very valuable job."

But pressure is mounting and there is growing speculation over how long Andrew can hang on to his post.

Andrew has courted trouble before: His much-publicized divorce from Sarah Ferguson, her subsequent missteps, massive debt, a tell-all interview and a videotaped attempt to sell a U.K. tabloid access to Andrew stand in stark contrast to the glow surrounding William and Kate Middleton's courtship and upcoming nuptials.

Since becoming a special trade representative in 2001, Andrew has also drawn criticism for reportedly taking lavish trips in his role as an unpaid trade ambassador.

The latest revelations in the British media have centered on Andrew's friendship with convicted pedophile

AP

In this Wednesday Jan. 23, 2008 file photo Britain's Prince Andrew, gestures while speaking during a session at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Jeffrey Epstein and claims that Andrew also had close ties to Seif al-Islam Gadhafi, one of the Libyan leader's sons.

Photos recently published in the British media show Andrew strolling in a park with Epstein—the New York billionaire jailed for soliciting underage prostitutes in Florida. Most recently, a photograph emerged showing Andrew with his arm around the waist of the teenage prostitute at the center of that case.

While there has been no suggestion of any wrongdoing on the part of Andrew, the sum of events has prompted some soul-searching over whether the prince is a suitable representative for U.K. interests abroad.

"The duke recognizes that his association with Jeffrey Epstein was, in retrospect, unwise," a person familiar with the matter said, noting that it can be understood Andrew will not be photographed with Epstein again anytime soon.

But that's not placating some who say enough is enough. Last week, British lawmaker Chris Bryant claimed that Andrew had close links to Seif Gadhafi. Bryant called for Andrew to be fired, telling the House of Commons "Isn't it time we dispensed with the services of the Duke of York?"

Buckingham Palace on Sunday rejected Bryant's claims, saying Andrew's interactions with the Gadhafi regime—and Tunisia's ousted dictatorship, too- fell within the mandate of his job as special trade representative.

"It was part of the British government's engagement with Libya at the time," a palace spokesman said on customary condition of anonymity.

The spokesman confirmed Andrew met Moammar Gadhafi twice. Both meetings were of public record and should not come as news, the spokesman said, adding that Andrew is "fully committed to his role as special representative."

"It is understood that he has the support of the government behind him," the spokesman said.

Government officials backed up that claim Sunday, citing Andrew's role in nurturing business interests.

To LOL, or not LOL? That is the question

By MARTHA IRVINE
AP NATIONAL WRITER

There was a time when LOL—"laughing out loud"—was so simple.

If I thought something in a casual online conversation was funny, I typed it. If I wanted to let someone know I was kidding in an e-mail or an instant message, same.

I might even have felt a little cool, using inside lingo that, at one time, was exclusive to the online world. (You know I am not the only one who thought so.)

Today, though, I am sensing a shift, even in my own thoughts, about LOL. Certainly, it is as ubiquitous as ever. Just search for it on Twitter or Facebook to see how often people use it. Not exactly deep and meaningful stuff, mind you, but there sure is a lot of it.

Perhaps that is why, at least in some circles, LOL has lost its cachet. And at its worst, it is making people a little cranky.

It is overused and meaningless, they say. It "epitomizes lazy, and makes people a liar" says Seth Ginsburg, a 29-year-old New Yorker. "Are they really laughing out loud?"

Comedian Demetri Martin has joked that he uses "LTMQ—laughing to myself quietly."

"It's more honest," he says.

I laugh every time I hear that joke—out loud, no less—because I too have this internal debate: I tell myself that I will type LOL only if I'm really "LOL-ing."

But I fail, regularly. It is just too easy to type (two keys, one finger or a thumb, if it is a cell phone), too convenient a response.

Sure, there are LOL haters out there, seemingly more all the time. But for better or worse, this modern-day acronym has become ingrained in our lexicon and, for some, has evolved in meaning.

"It's brevity at its finest, and it gets a point across," says 25-year-old Arzi Rachman, another New Yorker.

Try as some might, LOL will not be easily shaken.

■■■■

The origins of this three-letter acronym, in its current form, are not easy to pin down. Most likely, it was a gamer or hacker who first used LOL (or "lol") on an electronic message board, probably sometime in the 1980s.

Its use became more common on early Internet services such as CompuServe and Netcom. By the mid-1990s, when even more people joined America Online, the term LOL hit the mainstream in chat rooms and in instant messaging.

It morphed, as well. If you thought something was really, really funny, for instance, you might type ROFL—"rolling on the floor laughing"—or LMAO—"laughing my (you know what) off."

By 2004, fatigue was setting in. LOL was added to the "List of Words to Be Banished from the Queen's English for Mis-use, Over-use and General Uselessness," updated each year at Lake Superior State University in Michigan.

ON THE NET

I Can Has Cheezburger? http://icanhascheezburger.com/
Fahlman's original smiley proposal: http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~sef/Orig-Smiley.htm

Regardless, LOL went forth and multiplied and has since seeped into spoken language.

"At times, I do say LOL," says Rachman, a college student, "usually to accentuate sarcasm, or something along those lines."

Of course, when speaking of text conversations, one cannot forget the sideways smiley—:-)—which you might call LOL's older cousin.

Scott Fahlman, a research professor in the computer science department at Carnegie Mellon University, often gets credit for first suggesting that emoticon nearly 30 years ago. His fellow academics quickly embraced it and ushered in its everyday online use.

The sideways smiley has gotten bashed too -- it's been called the equivalent of "i's" dotted with hearts.

But asked if he has ever used LOL, Fahlman will tell you, "Nope." He draws the line.

"It sort of strikes me as kind of—this is going to sound sexist—a teenage girl thing," he says, "a high school thing."

But is that really true? Does the use of LOL really fall along generational lines? Was the implication that some of us are too old to use LOL?

"One of the things that's pretty clear—whether LOL is in or passe—it depends on your social circle," says Naomi Baron, a linguist at American University who wrote the book "Always On: Language in an Online and Mobile World."

As more people of all ages forge online lives, those social circles may be less divided by generation, though not completely.

In surveying college students about their use of online or texted terms, for example, Baron has noticed a difference in the way they use LOL. For them, it is often used as a simple acknowledgment that may have nothing to do with laughter. Instead, LOL might mean "oh," "got it," "heard you" or "really?"

That use might bother some people; Baron also has colleagues who scold her when she does not correct students who greet her with a "hey!"

But she says that kind of evolution in language happens all the time. Sometimes, it's for practical reasons or convenience. Other times, it simply is a style or trend.

In the 18th and early 19th centuries in England, Baron notes, it was commonplace to sign a letter using "Yr Hum Serv," an abbreviation for "Your Humble Servant."

"Everybody knew what that meant," she says. "It was just convention."

Today, it is happening on Twitter with "hash tags"—the number symbol. Originally meant to mark terms or events that users may search for, people have started using hash tags to highlight the equivalent of a funny or snarky side comment. That use has since transferred to Facebook, where hash tags do not even apply.

"It's all part of marking your territory," Baron says. "People mark it linguistically. They mark it by dress. They mark it by how many earrings they have in their ears—you name it."

All of that makes sense to Ben Huh, who heads the Seattle-based company that oversees popular humor websites such as "I Can Has Cheezburger?" and "FAIL Blog." His sites allow users to share funny videos and photos, which he and his staff call "LOLs" or "lolz."

"I don't actually remember the first time I started using this lingo because it seemed to me that it was just part of life," says Huh, who is 33. "I didn't adopt the use of Internet cultural languages. I just grew up with it."

So for him, using LOL feels as natural as saying "OK," or "cool." He also could not care less whether a person who uses LOL really is laughing out loud.

"It's like the suburban dad who wants to put his hat on backward," he says, "versus the kid who puts a hat on backward because that's just what they do."

It is not necessarily a matter of age, he says, but whether it is really just who you are.

I have decided that LOL is me, sometimes.

Just like I do not send text messages to my mother, because they never would see the light of day, I probably would not use LOL with my boss or an acquaintance or any number of people who kvetched about LOL when I told them I was writing a story about it.

They are more likely to see the buttoned-up purist in me who avoids cliches "like the plague," as one of my college professors once encouraged me to do.

But then there is the me who has the urge to wear my pajamas to the coffee shop on a lazy Sunday morning.

She uses LOL, and wishes the world would lighten up, just a little.

Martha Irvine is an AP national writer. She can be reached at mirvine@ap.org

Fashion world flocks to see Galliano collection

PARIS (AP)—Likely motivated by equal parts love and admiration and morbid curiosity, fashion insiders descended Sunday on a tony Paris townhouse to see what could very well be the last ever collection by John Galliano, the brilliant British designer whose undoing last week has shocked and horrified the industry.

Galliano's longtime employer, luxury supernova Dior, fired him last Tuesday amid allegations he made anti-Semitic insults and after a video showing a drunk Galliano saying "I love Hitler" went viral on the Internet.

The saga, which has riveted the fashion world for the past ten days and cast a palpable pall over Paris' ready-to-wear displays, also threw the future of the designer's signature label into doubt. The John Galliano brand is owned by Dior parent company LVMH Moet Hennessy.

For several days after Galliano's surprise sacking, it wasn't clear whether his label's fall-winter 2011-12 ready-to-wear collection would be shown to the press and buyers at all. But finally company executives settled on holding a low-key presentation instead of the big-budget blockbuster runway shows that have become a trademark of the house.

Galliano, who is rumored to be in rehab in Arizona, wasn't present at Sunday's display. But for those who love his work, it was a moving moment, and one to savor.

There were only 19 looks, but they all fairly oozed Galliano's unmistakable style. The models' makeup, too, and their languid walk and exaggerated poses were exactly as the designer would have done it himself.

Asked whether Sunday's presentation would help turn the page on the Galliano scandal, Style.com senior editor Tim Blanks said: "It's going to take a while. This is like an open wound for the industry and it's going to take a long time to fully heal over."

Depp's 'Rango' corrals $38M opening at box office

AP
In this film publicity image released by Paramount Pictures, Rango, left, voiced by Johnny Depp, is shown in a scene from the animated feature, "Rango."

1. "**Rango**," $38 million.
2. "**The Adjustment Bureau**," $20.9 million.
3. "**Beastly**," $10.1 million
4. "**Hall Pass**," $9 million.
5. "**Gnomeo and Juliet**," $6.9 million.
6. "**Unknown**," $6.6 million.
7. "**The King's Speech**," $6.5 million.
8. "**Just Go With It**," $6.5 million.
9. "**I Am Number Four**," $5.7 million.
10. "**Justin Bieber: Never Say Never**," $4.3 million.

LOS ANGELES (AP)—"Rango" has lassoed the top spot at the box office.

The animated Paramount film featuring Johnny Depp as the voice of a Wild West chameleon sheriff rode into town with a $38 million debut, according to studio estimates released Sunday.

"Rango," which was directed by "Pirates of the Caribbean" film franchise maestro Gore Verbinski, is the first animated feature from Industrial Light and Magic, the special effects studio founded by George Lucas in 1975.

"The draw for audiences was certainly Johnny Depp and Gore Verbinski, but when you look at the reviews, it was 88 percent positive on Rotten Tomatoes, which is a level that Pixar operates at," said Don Harris, Paramount's executive vice president for distribution. "This is a film that has a shot at being nominated for Academy Awards this time next year."

Universal's mind-bending thriller "The Adjustment Bureau," starring Matt Damon and Emily Blunt, debuted in the No. 2 spot with $20.9 million. CBS Films' fantasy tale "Beastly" with Alex Pettyfer and Vanessa Hudgens opened at No. 3 with $10.1 million, rounding out the weekend's top three films. It was another down weekend for Hollywood, with grosses coming in less than the corresponding weekend last year.

"Comparisons to a year ago are tough considering that's when 'Alice in Wonderland' opened with $116.1 million," said Hollywood.com analyst Paul Dergarabedian, referring to the Tim Burton film. "We're not even in that realm this year, so this is our second down weekend in a row. We've only had one up weekend at the box office versus a year ago. There's this malaise overtaking the marketplace."

The raunchy Warner Bros. comedy "Hall Pass" stayed committed in its second weekend in the No. 4 position with $9 million. The 3-D animated Walt Disney romance "Gnomeo and Juliet" also kept that loving feeling going in its fourth weekend with $6.9 million in the No. 5 spot, despite an animated showdown against "Rango," which was not released in 3-D.

"The King's Speech," the royal chronicle from the Weinstein Co. that ruled last week's Academy Awards with 12 wins, maintained the No. 7 place this weekend with $6.5 million.

The weekend's other wide release, Relativity Media's throwback comedy "Take Me Home Tonight" starring Topher Grace and Anna Faris, only took home $3.5 million in the No. 11 spot. The box-office war will heat up with another barrage of movies opening next weekend, which includes the sci-fi saga "Battle: Los Angeles" and the PG-13 fairytale "Red Riding Hood."

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Rango
Friday 4:00 7:00 9:30
Saturday 1:00 4:00 7:00 9:30
Sunday 1:00 4:00 7:00
Mon thru Thurs 4:00 7:00
Johnny Depp, Isla Fisher
Children's/Family • Rated G
Synopsis
Helmer Gore Verbinksi (Pirates of the Caribbean) directs this family-oriented animated adventure starring the voice of Johnny Depp as a family pet who leaves the comfort of home in order to explore the outside world. John Logan (The Aviator) provides the script for the Paramount Pictures production. Abigail Breslin, Isla Fisher, Alfred Molina, Ray Winstone, Harry Dean Stanton, and Ned Beatty provide the voices for the rest of the cast.

Take Me Home Tonight
Friday 4:05 7:05 9:45
Saturday 1:05 4:05 7:05 9:45
Sunday 1:05 4:05 7:05
Mon thru Thurs 4:05 7:05
Ana Faris, Topher Grace
Comedy Drama • Rated R
Synopsis
Topher Grace and Anna Faris star in It's All Gone Pete Tong screenwriter/director Michael Dowse's coming of age comedy drama concerning a rowdy group of recent college graduates who venture out for one last night of fun before accepting the responsibilities of adulthood.

The Adjustment Bureau
Friday 4:10 7:10 9:50
Saturday 1:10 4:10 7:10 9:50
Sunday 1:10 4:10 7:10
Mon thru Thurs 4:10 7:10
Matt Damon, Emily Blunt
Science Fiction • Rated PG 13
Synopsis
Matt Damon and Emily Blunt headline this romantic sci-fi drama based on a short story by Philip K. Dick, and detailing the troubled love affair between a rising congressman and a gorgeous ballerina. The closer these two lovers get, the harder shadowy forces work to drive them apart by altering the very fabric of time and space.

★ ★ ★

Hall Pass
Friday 4:15 7:15 10:00
Saturday 1:15 4:15 7:15 10:00
Sunday 1:15 4:15 7:15
Mon thru Thurs 4:15 7:15
Owen Wilson, Jason Sudeikis
Comedy • Rated R

I Am Number Four
Friday 4:25 7:25 9:35
Saturday 1:25 4:25 7:25 9:35
Sunday 1:25 4:25 7:25
Mon thru Thurs 4:25 7:25
Alex Pettyfer, Timothy Olyphant
Science Fiction • Rated PG 13

Big Momma's Like Father Like Son
Friday 4:20 7:20 9:40
Saturday 1:20 4:20 7:20 9:40
Sunday 1:20 4:20 7:20
Mon thru Thurs 4:20 7:20
Martin Lawrence, Brandon T. Jackson
Comedy • Rated PG 13

Unknown
Friday 4:30 7:30 9:55
Saturday 1:30 4:30 7:30 9:55
Sunday 1:30 4:30 7:30
Mon thru Thurs 4:30 7:30
Liam Neeson, Diane Kruger
Thriller • Rated PG 13

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Paper says Kate Middleton chooses McQueen designer

LONDON (AP)—A leading British newspaper reported Sunday that Sarah Burton, creative director of the Alexander McQueen fashion house, has been chosen to design Kate Middleton's wedding gown.

But both Burton and the company's chief executive deny the claim.

The Sunday Times story said Burton has received the plum assignment, then quotes her and McQueen CEO Jonathan Akeroyd saying this is not the case. Both flatly denied the McQueen house is involved.

The paper did not name any sources, suggesting the information had reached the newspaper after Akeroyd told a colleague about receiving the royal gig.

A Paris-based publicist for the McQueen house dismissed the report in an e-mail to The Associated Press, saying "We can confirm this story is untrue."

The contradictory story, which buzzed throughout Facebook and Twitter, did not clarify one of the central mysteries surrounding the April 29 wedding of Middleton and Prince William: Who will actually design the gown she wears for her transformation from commoner to princess?

Q&A: William Shatner talks of 'Star Trek,' acting and (wink) his enviable physique

By MARIAN LIU
THE SEATTLE TIMES

SEATTLE—As Captain James T. Kirk on the original 1960s TV series "Star Trek," William Shatner charted a course for a career playing brash and over-the-top types.

More recently, an element of humor has crept into his work—on Priceline commercials, guest spots on "Conan" and the sitcom "$#(ASTERISK)! My Dad Says."

ON THE NET
- William Shatner: www.williamshatner.com
- William Shatner on Twitter: http://twitter.com/williamshatner

The 79-year-old actor's charming and self-effacing side was on full display in a phone interview earlier this week, as he talked about his screen persona and "Star Trek." Presumably he'll do more of the same on Saturday when he headlines the annual Emerald City Comicon at the Washington State Convention Center.

Q. How would you describe yourself?

A. I'm 6 feet 2 inches, 180 pounds, wedge shaped, tapering down to a slim waist and muscular shoulders. ... Why are you laughing?

Q. The characters you play seem to be based on you, but how much are they actually like you?

A. I suppose it has elements of me. I'm going to host the Canadian Emmy Awards, The Genies, and they had written some material for me. It was brash, funny and vulgar, so I said to them, "Who are you writing for?" This is an invented Shatner. ... I hope it's not too much me. ... I'm more honest, and more human.

Q. How did you develop the speaking cadence you are so known for?

A. I don't really talk that way. I probably spoke like that in "Star Trek," because I was trying to figure out what else to say and what the words were, so it came out in that cadence.

Q. What are your thoughts on "Star Trek's" legacy?

A. "Star Trek" was and is apparently a cultural phenomenon. I think it struck a nerve in its humanity, as well as its sense of adventure. Maybe the actors had something to do with it. ... It was a joyful experience for me.

Q. Would you want to be in the next movie?

A. I'd like to be in it, but I think it'll be difficult to rationalize how Capt. Kirk got to my age and looks like me, you know, being 6 feet 2 inches, muscular in the shoulders and 180 pounds.

Q. How do you usually pick your roles?

A. If it's funny. ... I'm in the midst of writing a book right now. ... One of the chapters is called, "Saying Yes To Life," because if you don't say yes you miss an opportunity. You may fail and may be lousy and people may laugh at you, but you miss an opportunity to do well, too.

Q. I have one more question.

A. No, I'm married.

'Slumdog' star loses home in Mumbai fire

MUMBAI, India (AP)—"Slumdog Millionaire" child star Rubina Ali said Saturday that her home had burned down in a fire that raged through a crowded slum in the Indian city of Mumbai.

Most of the awards that she received for her role as a poverty-stricken child in the Oscar-winning film were destroyed in the blaze that erupted in the Garib Nagar slum late Friday, the 12-year-old said.

She said that she and other members of her family were watching television when they heard shouts of a fire and ran out of their tin-roofed shanty.

"We just grabbed what we could and dashed out. The fire spread so fast we couldn't get back in," said Rafiq Ali, Rubina's father.

Rubina said she had lost all her awards and her collection of newspaper clippings and photographs from the success of the 2008 film.

"It's all gone. Even my best clothes, everything," a tearful-sounding Rubina said over the telephone.

AP

"Slumdog Millionaire" child star Rubina Ali sits outside her house with her belongings at a slum in Mumbai, India, Saturday, March 5, 2011.

The child star said the family was yet to move into a new apartment paid for by a trust set up by the film's director, Danny Boyle.

Rubina played the young Latika in "Slumdog Millionaire," the rags-to-riches blockbuster that won eight Oscars.

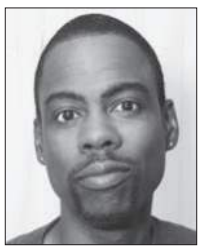
Police were investigating the cause of the fire, which left 21 people injured and 2,000 homeless. Fires often break out in Mumbai's sprawling slums, usually sparked by electrical short circuits from the many thousands of illegal power connections.

Chris Rock adds Broadway to his funny resume

NEW YORK (AP)—How do you top a winter in which you've made fun of TV talk show host Oprah Winfrey to her face, gleefully butchered a classic Simon and Garfunkel song during a telethon and made a guest appearance on Kanye West's mega-selling CD?

If you're Chris Rock, the next stop is Broadway.

"I always look for everything," says the comedian, sitting at a table at the theater-district hangout Sardi's before rehearsals of his new gritty play by Stephen Adly Guirgis.



Rock

"You want to give your audience something funny or something good—that can be anything. It can be a play, it can be a movie," he says. "Hey, I was on Kayne's record! That's funnier than probably anything I've done in a couple of years. You know what I mean? How can I be funny this year?"

The answer now is "The Motherf----- With the Hat." It's about a man on parole and trying to live clean with his volatile girlfriend, who is far from sober. Rock, making his Broadway debut, plays the man's drug counselor.

"Honestly, it was the best thing I read all last year. It was better than every movie script, every book—it was better than everything," he says. "I read a couple of other plays and thought, 'This is easily the best one I've read.'"

Clooney film finishes Cincinnati-area scenes

AP

In a Feb. 23, 2011 photo, actor-director George Clooney watches camera monitors during the shooting of a scene for the film, "Ides of March," at Fountain Square, in Cincinnati, Ohio.

CINCINNATI (AP)—Hometown hero George Clooney and the cast and crew of "Ides of March" have finished filming in the Cincinnati and northern Kentucky areas and are moving on to Detroit.

The Cincinnati Enquirer reports that, over three-and-a-half weeks ending Friday, as many as 20 sites were filmed, including Xavier University and Fountain Square in Cincinnati and Miami University in Oxford, where students were extras in a scene depicting a presidential primary debate

Clooney acts in and directs the film about a presidential campaign. It's his first movie to have filming in the area where he grew up.

The Oscar-winning actor was born in Lexington, Ky., and grew up in Cincinnati area communities. Film publicist Tracey Schaefer says about 90 percent of the story is set in Cincinnati, northern Kentucky and Oxford.

Miley Cyrus meets her impression as 'SNL' host

NEW YORK (AP)—Miley Cyrus has met her "Saturday Night Live" impression while lampooning a fellow teen pop star herself.

Cyrus hosted "SNL" on Saturday night, leading to an inevitable face-off between the 18-year-old singer and cast member Vanessa Bayer's parody. But Cyrus appeared on Bayer's "The Miley Cyrus Show" not as herself, but 17-year-old Justin Bieber.

Cyrus played Bieber as too hip to use Bayer's enthusiastic "pretty cool" catch phrase.

In other sketches, Cyrus also played Fergie and Lindsay Lohan. Her Lohan impression occurred during a sketch with cast members portraying Charlie Sheen as the host of a TV show called "Duh! Winning!" with Lohan, Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi and fashion designer John Galliano as guests.

Cyrus

Cameras rolling for possible Sheen show on HDNet

DALLAS (AP)—Actor Charlie Sheen could soon have a home on Mark Cuban's HDNet station.

Cameras already are rolling, although plenty of details still need to be worked out — such as what kind of show it might be. Cuban said Sunday a decision of whether to make it a reality show, a talk show or something else will be up to Sheen.

Sheen has become a media phenomenon lately with off-beat rantings filled with lines that have become catchphrases, such as "tiger blood" and a drug called Charlie Sheen. It's all part of a campaign to disprove that he is a drug-using, reckless playboy.

The future of his hit CBS show "Two and a Half Men" is uncertain.

Cuban described Sheen as "somebody that everybody has a whole lot of interest in who is doing some interesting things, to say the least."

Rough play causes painful injury to loving family pet

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
FROM UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

DearAbby

DEAR ABBY: My 9-year-old son's friend "Isaac" was over for a visit. He was captivated by our Labrador retriever, "Layla," who is very loving. Isaac doesn't have a dog, so he wanted to play with Layla. At one point, I overheard him say to my son, "Look, I'm riding your dog!" I immediately intervened, but I was too late.

A day or so later, Layla was unable to descend our stairway and was clearly in pain. She has been on pain medication for three weeks and is growing progressively worse. The next step is to get X-rays and/or an MRI to see if she has a spinal injury, and then determine her treatment. It's possible the damage is irreversible.

My wife and I are extremely upset about this, but we're afraid to tell our son or Isaac and his parents for fear it will place undue guilt on a 9-year-old boy. On the flip side, I wouldn't want him to do this to anyone else's beloved pet. How do you recommend we proceed?

HEARTBROKEN IN NEW YORK

DEAR HEARTBROKEN: Children are not mind-readers. If you don't tell them when they make a mistake, they won't realize they have made one. Contact Isaac's parents and explain what happened. If your dog needs treatment, they should be responsible for whatever damage their son did.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: The other day I was with a friend who is a bit overweight. We were trying on clothes in one of the stores. She grabbed a shirt she was sure she could fit into, but when she tried it on, it ripped. She had to pay for it.

On the ride home my friend asked me, "Am I fat?" I was at a loss, so I told her no. What should I have done? I feel horrible for lying, but I didn't know what else to do.

LOST FOR WORDS

DEAR LOST FOR WORDS: You could have replied, "What size was the shirt?" And when she answered, you should have said, "I guess you're a size or two larger." It would have been more tactful than saying she was fat, and gotten the point across.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: My wife and I recently attended the funeral of a friend's father. During the sermon I noticed tears in our friend's eyes and offered her my handkerchief. On the way home, this sparked a conversation about the obligation of a person who receives a handkerchief. Should it be returned after the event, or should it first be laundered? Or is it considered a gift, not to be returned at all?

Later that evening at a movie, I noticed a woman hand someone her handkerchief saying, "It's monogrammed. It was my mother's." No mention was made of a request that it be returned. I'm sure most people wouldn't mind letting go of a standard handkerchief, but one with sentimental value would be different, wouldn't it? What do you suggest?

REAL MEN CARRY HANDKERCHIEFS

DEAR REAL MAN: You were chivalrous to offer your handkerchief to the grieving daughter. Had it merely been used to dab away a tear, it could have been returned to you at the end of the service. If, however, there was makeup on it—or the dab was followed by a swipe of her nose—the woman should have held onto it, laundered it and returned it to you in the presumably pristine condition it was in when you gave it to her.

As to the monogrammed (heirloom) hanky you saw lent in the theater, when the woman explained its significance to her friend, that was the tip-off that she expected it to be returned.

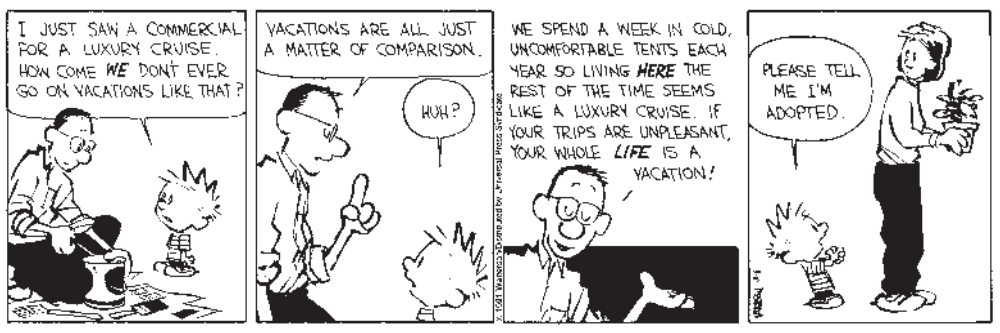
Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

For everything you need to know about wedding planning, order "How to Have a Lovely Wedding." Send a business-sized, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for $6 (U.S. funds only) to: Dear Abby–Wedding Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

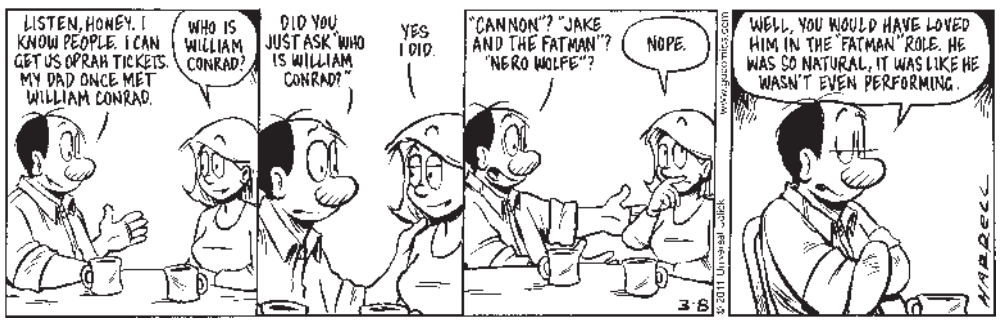

I JUST SAW A COMMERCIAL FOR A LUXURY CRUISE. HOW COME WE DON'T EVER GO ON VACATIONS LIKE THAT?
VACATIONS ARE ALL JUST A MATTER OF COMPARISON.
HUH?
WE SPEND A WEEK IN COLD, UNCOMFORTABLE TENTS EACH YEAR SO LIVING HERE THE REST OF THE TIME SEEMS LIKE A LUXURY CRUISE. IF YOUR TRIPS ARE UNPLEASANT, YOUR WHOLE LIFE IS A VACATION!
PLEASE TELL ME I'M ADOPTED.

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

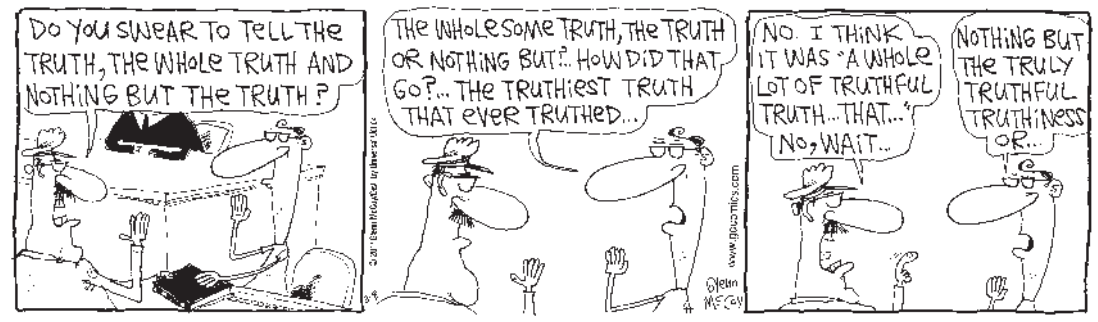
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


LISTEN, HONEY. I KNOW PEOPLE. I CAN GET US OPRAH TICKETS. MY DAD ONCE MET WILLIAM CONRAD.
WHO IS WILLIAM CONRAD?
DID YOU JUST ASK "WHO IS WILLIAM CONRAD?"
YES I DID.
"CANNON"? "JAKE AND THE FATMAN"? "NERO WOLFE"?
NOPE.
WELL, YOU WOULD HAVE LOVED HIM IN THE "FATMAN" ROLE. HE WAS SO NATURAL, IT WAS LIKE HE WASN'T EVEN PERFORMING.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


DO YOU SWEAR TO TELL THE TRUTH, THE WHOLE TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH?
THE WHOLESOME TRUTH, THE TRUTH OR NOTHING BUT?.. HOW DID THAT GO?... THE TRUTHIEST TRUTH THAT EVER TRUTHED...
NO. I THINK IT WAS "A WHOLE LOT OF TRUTHFUL TRUTH... THAT..." NO, WAIT...
NOTHING BUT THE TRULY TRUTHFUL TRUTHINESS OR...

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

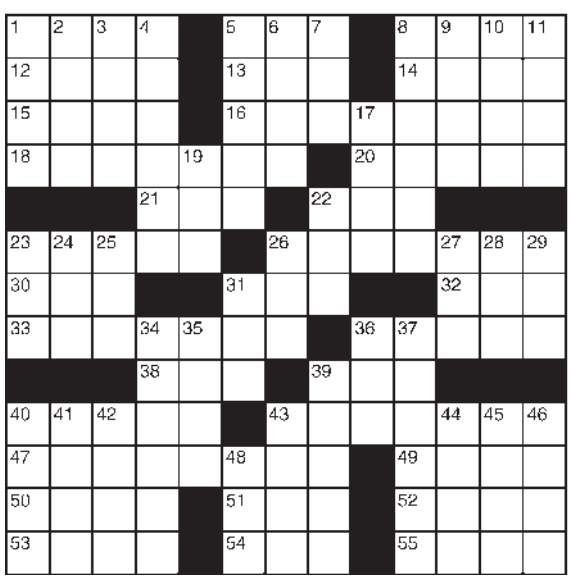
ACROSS
1 Rock band, Motley —
5 Miler Sebastian
8 Sudden swerves
12 Stereo setup
13 Antique
14 And others (Lat.)
15 Enthusiastic, plus
16 Gushy love letter
18 Write quickly
20 Intended
21 Your
22 Explosive letters
23 Tremor
26 NYC-based TV game show
30 Illustrations
31 Formalwear, for short
32 Praise in verse
33 Attack with words
36 Parody
38 Hostel
39 Blower
40 Marshal Earp
43 Pound sign, on Twitter
47 1950 Kurosawa classic
49 Unbridled revelry
50 Sheltered
51 "Dancing With the Stars" network
52 Taleteller
53 Bosc or Bartlett
54 Plaything
55 Days gone by

DOWN
1 Neighbor of Sudan
2 Latvia's capital
3 Fleet from far away?
4 Skating figures
5 Snug and cozy
6 Minnesota's St. — College
7 Mag. staffers
8 Pinnacle
9 Teensy bit
10 Fence opening
11 Coaster
17 — Christian Andersen
19 Resistance unit
22 IRS' share
23 "My gal" of song
24 Historic time
25 "— Impossible"
26 Snip
27 Barracks bed
28 Fuss
29 26-Across host Bailey
31 Wine cask
34 Here
35 Not fooled by
36 — de deux
37 Wicked
39 Ornate
40 Cover a gift
41 New Haven school
42 On the briny
43 Vagrant
44 Small combo
45 Culture medium
46 Form a spiral
48 Wrestling surface

Solution time: 21 mins.

W	E	B	B	■	D	E	B	■	A	L	A	R
O	R	A	L	■	O	R	E	■	R	A	N	I
O	N	T	O	■	W	R	E	S	T	I	N	G
S	C	H	O	R	N	■	S	T	I	L	E	S
■	■	■	M	A	T	A	■	Y	E	A	■	■
P	R	E	S	T	I	G	E	■	R	A	R	E
R	E	X	■	A	M	O	V	E	■	L	E	W
E	P	I	C	■	E	G	E	S	T	I	V	E
■	■	■	S	H	H	■	O	N	E	R	■	■
A	T	T	A	I	N	■	I	L	E	X	E	S
Q	U	E	S	T	I	O	N	■	B	E	T	A
U	R	N	S	■	G	A	G	■	E	N	O	S
A	N	T	E	■	I	I	R	S	■	K	A	N	S

Yesterday's answer 3-8



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: James Van Der Beek, 34; Freddie Prinze Jr., 35; Camryn Manheim, 50; Aidan Quinn, 52

Happy Birthday: Your intuition will be on target this year but your tendency to overreact is likely to take over, leaving you in a precarious position. Think before you act. Spend time on detail and fine-tuning whatever you are trying to accomplish. If you meddle or get involved in melodramas, you will miss out on what's truly important. Your numbers are 2, 10, 17, 28, 34, 37, 48

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): Do what you can for others without judging or you will end up being the one criticized. Crossing the line between right and wrong will lead to aggressive and unsavory action. Take an easygoing and humble approach if you want to excel. ✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Pull in help from whatever source you can to get things done, but keep a close watch. You will be judged on your performance as a leader and a team player, so you will only be as good as your weakest link. ✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): Uncertainty will set you back. Whether it's you who cannot make up your mind or someone you are collaborating with, be willing to make a decision. An unexpected question will leave you in an awkward position. Honesty will spare you further grief. ✪✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Use your imagination on the job and you will secure your position. Taking an authoritative stance will prove that you are able to delegate work as well as get the job done on time and to specification. ✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): Attend work-related events that can help you connect with people in your field. The more contacts you have, the easier it will be to stay on top of interesting positions that may open up. Right time, right place lead to success. ✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): Separate what you want from what you don't and move forward. Greater opportunities will come if you accommodate others and become more self-sufficient. Good relationships will complement you. ✪✪✪✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): Get out with friends or your lover or take a mental health day. You don't have to spend a lot to have a good time. Added discipline will help you address a personal challenge and come out on top. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Let your heart rule your head and follow your basic instincts. You will be able to make changes that will help you enjoy your home, family and personal life that much more. Make alterations to your living quarters. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): Don't ruin a good opportunity because you are engaged in a feud with someone who has shown you nothing but inconsistency. Rethink your strategy and take a new approach. An old flame is thinking about you. Make contact. ✪✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Don't let an emotional situation distract you. It's important to finish what you start. Take on the tasks you yourself own and you will show everyone how competent you are. ✪✪

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): Now is the time to put a little cash away for an unexpected expense. Lending and borrowing will backfire, causing a problem between you and someone who is important to you. A responsible attitude will set the way for how others treat you. ✪✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): You'll have trouble hiding your feelings, so clear the air. Communication will be necessary if want to be successful in love, life and your financial position. A clear conscience will enable you to strive for your goals without hesitation. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are insightful and emotional and you understand what needs to be done and act accordingly. You do what's required to improve your life.

Eugenia's Web sites: ***eugenialast.com*** *for confidential consultations,* ***myspace.com/eugenialast*** *for Eugenia's blog,* ***astroadvice.com*** *for fun*

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

		7				6		
		8	6	3	4	2		
			2		1			
	5	6				8	2	
	4			8			7	
	7	2				3	4	
			1		5			
		4	8	9	7	1		
		1				9		

Difficulty Level ★★ 3/08

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

7	8	3	9	2	5	4	6	1
1	2	9	3	6	4	7	8	5
6	4	5	8	1	7	3	9	2
5	6	8	4	3	2	9	1	7
3	9	2	1	7	8	6	5	4
4	7	1	5	9	6	8	2	3
9	5	7	6	4	1	2	3	8
8	3	4	2	5	9	1	7	6
2	1	6	7	8	3	5	4	9

Difficulty Level ★ 3/07

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

SLINGBACK SHOES **Solution: 6 letters**

S	L	R	O	L	O	C	P	A	S	T	P	Y	S	A
C	U	I	E	G	N	I	N	E	V	E	T	N	D	T
E	U	E	G	L	N	P	L	G	T	E	A	J	N	E
O	H	T	D	H	O	Y	A	S	I	K	U	E	A	M
S	P	T	E	E	T	S	N	R	E	S	M	L	R	M
U	A	E	T	S	E	I	A	P	T	A	E	A	B	O
O	I	U	N	P	A	V	R	A	N	S	S	D	L	R
R	R	O	A	N	L	I	B	R	Y	Z	T	I	L	G
O	E	H	K	I	N	L	O	O	K	S	A	R	L	E
M	S	L	N	T	E	S	N	O	T	T	U	B	O	Y
A	E	I	P	L	T	N	A	G	E	L	E	T	S	S
L	N	S	K	M	S	A	N	D	A	L	P	C	L	S
G	E	C	A	L	I	D	N	I	H	E	B	I	E	E
P	U	M	P	S	H	S	U	L	E	A	T	H	E	R
B	M	R	O	F	T	A	L	P	L	O	O	C	K	D

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Adjustable, Ankle, Behind, Brands, Bridal, Buckle, Buttons, Chic, Color, Cool, Cute, Design, Detail, Dressy, Easily, Elegant, Evening, Glamorous, Glitzy, Grommet, Heel, Instep, Lace, Leather, Light, Lining, Looks, Lush, Open, Ornament, Pair, Peep Toe, Platform, Pumps, Sandal, Shape, Silhouette, Simple, Sleek, Snake Print, Sole, Strap, Styles, Suede, Variety

Yesterday's Answer: Exquisito

The NEW Treasury of Wonderword Puzzles is now on sale for $10.95 at bookstores or by calling toll-free 1-800-642-6479. Or order online at www.wonderword.com.

CLASSIFIED ADS

FOR RENT - RESIDENTIAL

Fina Sisu Apt., 2-BR, 1-BTH, FF, AC, BU Genset/ 24-hr water, security, laundry room, free Wi-Fi & ample parking. Right behind NMC campus. MIHA applicants accepted. Special rates for NMC faculty/ students. Call 235-6527/8 or 285-1317 for info.

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Lakers rout NBA-best Spurs for 7th straight win

SAN ANTONIO (AP)—Kobe Bryant agreed it might have been the Lakers' best game so far.

It technically wasn't the worst for the San Antonio, though it often looked that way.

The Lakers may not catch the NBA's winningest team for the No. 1 seed in time for the playoffs, but they handed the Spurs a blunt reminder that the Western Conference is still theirs to surrender, beating San Antonio 99-83 in a blowout Sunday.

Bryant, who finished with 26 points, didn't make much of it.

"I don't think it's that big of a message that we sent today," he said.

It was the seventh straight victory for the Lakers, who are playing as well as any point this season. Coach Phil Jackson concedes that San Antonio's 6 1/2-game lead in the West may be too big to overcome with 18 games left. But the Lakers still made a few marks.

One is emphatically ending San Antonio's franchise-record home winning streak at 22 games. Another is beating the Spurs for the first time in three tries, including last month's stunning loss in Los Angeles when Antonio McDyess tipped in the game-winner at the buzzer.

Bryant, for his part, didn't show any excitement in winning this round.

"Why should I be?" he said.

Instead, Bryant sought to keep the lopsided win in perspective.

"We know we're capable of having games like this and San Antonio knows we're capable of having games like this," he said. "It just as easily could go the other way around."

Tony Parker led the Spurs with 14 points. He was their only starter in double figures; Tim Duncan scored two points and Manu Ginobili scored six.

Two days after San Antonio humiliated LeBron James and Miami in a 30-point blowout, the Spurs took their own lumps. The NBA's sixth-highest scoring team mustered just 37 points in the first half—matching a season low—and shot 36 percent from the floor.

And it could've been worse. The Lakers led by as many as 32 in third quarter before the Spurs threw in the towel and emptied their bench.

"They hit us in the mouth from the beginning and by the time we realized it, it was the ninth round and we were down on the scorecard," Spurs guard Gary Neal said.

Pau Gasol scored 21 points and Andrew Bynum had 17 rebounds for the Lakers, who can match their longest win streak of the season with a victory at Atlanta on Tuesday.

It's part of arguably the toughest stretch this season for the Lakers, who are still out to prove they're the NBA's best despite trailing the Spurs all season. The Lakers will also play at Miami and at Dallas before coming home to face Orlando on March 14.

By the time the Magic leave Los Angeles, the Lakers will have faced four of the NBA's top seven teams in a span of eight days.

Jackson called it the best the Lakers have played all season against this caliber opponent.

"We need to be at our peak later on," Gasol said. "Not right now."

The last Spurs loss at the AT&T Center had been to Dallas on Nov. 26. But that 103-94 defeat wasn't anything like this.

Bryant finished 12 for 25 and had seven rebounds. His only blemish was a technical foul in the second quarter after getting tangled up with Ginobili, leading to a brief exchange of stares and words.

Ron Artest rushed between the two and pulled Bryant away. It was Bryant's 14th technical foul this season, though he stands at 12 after having two rescinded. The NBA issues a one-game suspension after 16 technical fouls.

The last time the Spurs and Lakers met was in Los Angeles on Feb. 3, when the Spurs won 89-88 on McDyess' tip-in as time expired. Jackson had his video staff pull that clip before this one and remind his team of a game Jackson said they should've won.

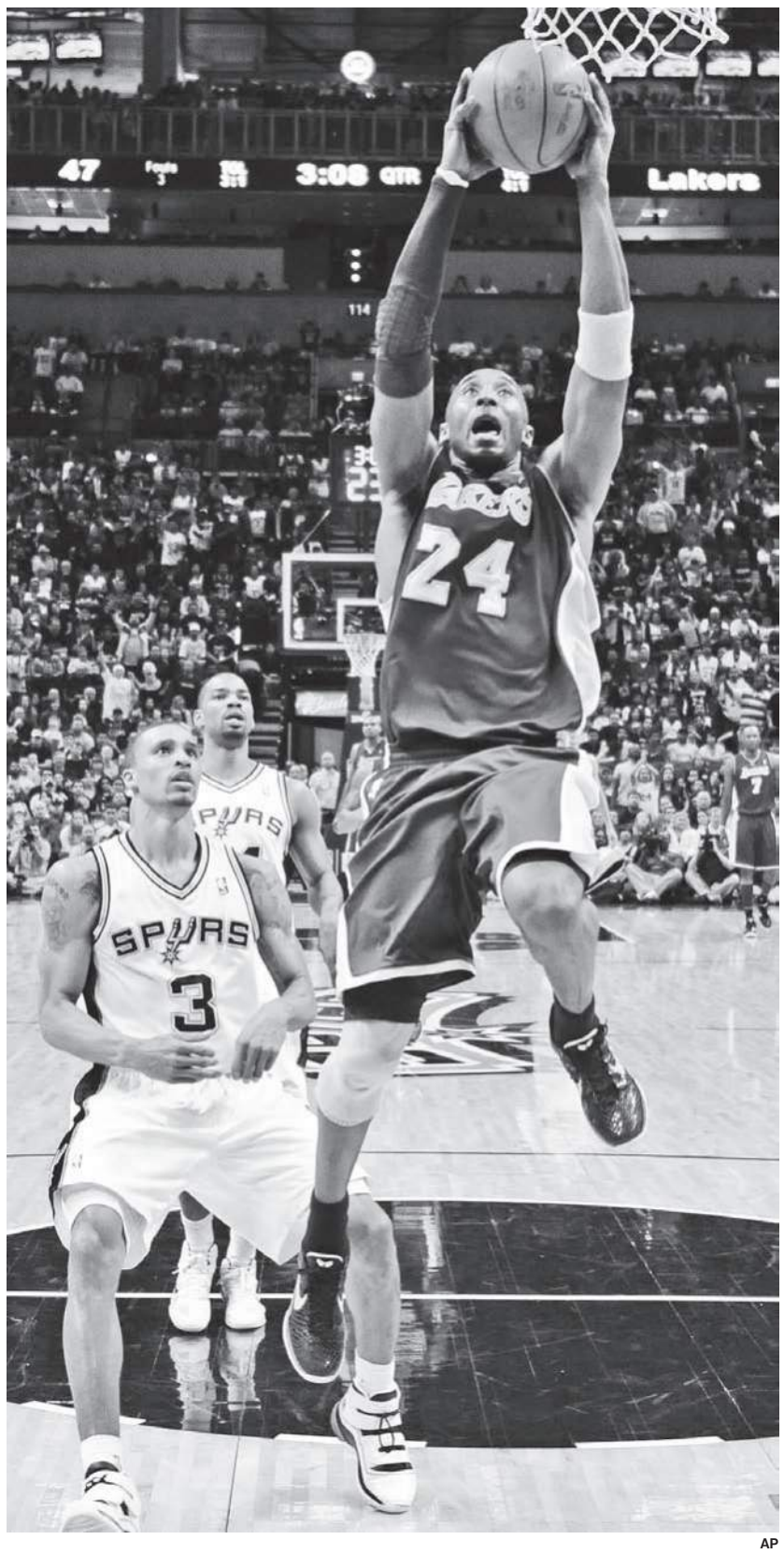
It apparently worked.

Neal scored 15 points and George Hill added 14 for the Spurs.

"Nobody expects to be losing by more than 20 in the first quarter," Ginobili said. "But the way the game presented itself, they were making every shot. We couldn't make layups, 3s, free throws, anything."

San Antonio's most lopsided defeat this season was a 24-point loss at New Orleans on Jan. 22.

Derek Fisher scored eight points and remained in the starting lineup after being listed as probable going into the game because of a strained right elbow.



AP

Los Angeles Lakers guard Kobe Bryant (24) scores on a dunk in front of San Antonio Spurs guard George Hill during the second half of an NBA basketball game at the AT&T Center in San Antonio, Sunday, March 6, 2011

Hornets 96, Cavaliers 81

At Cleveland, Chris Paul left the court on a stretcher and suffered a concussion in the New Orleans Hornets' victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers.

The four-time All-Star lost the ball in the third quarter driving into the lane as he was defended by Ramon Sessions and Samardo Samuels. As Paul tried to retrieve the ball, he hit his forehead on Sessions' right shoulder and immediately fell to the court. Paul stayed on the floor as trainers from both teams attended to him.

Paul, who was moving his legs and feet, was placed on a flat board and a brace was put on his neck. Players from both teams surrounded him. He was wheeled to the locker room and gave a thumbs up to the crowd as he left the court. He was taken to Cleveland Clinic for precautionary tests, then rejoined the team for its flight to Chicago. He will miss Monday's game.

David West scored 23 points, and Paul had 13 points and 11 assists in 26 minutes.

Bulls 87, Heat 86

At Miami, Derrick Rose scored 27 points and Luol Deng capped an 18-point effort with two free throws that put Chicago ahead for good, as the Bulls handed Miami its fourth straight loss.

Carlos Boozer scored 12 and Joakim Noah added 11 for the Bulls, who moved a game ahead of Miami into outright possession of second place in the Eastern Conference and beat the Heat for the third time this season.

LeBron James scored 26 points, Chris Bosh added 23 and Dwyane Wade had 20 for the Heat. James and Wade both missed shots that would have won it for Miami in the final 8 seconds.

Celtics 89, Bucks 83

At Milwaukee, Paul Pierce scored 23 points, and Kevin Garnett added 14 points and 11 rebounds to lift Boston over Milwaukee for their fifth straight win.

Boston remained three games up on Chicago atop the Eastern Conference.

With the game tied at 82-82, Boston's Big Three came through. Ray Allen hit a 17-foot jumper, Garnett made an 11-foot fadeaway jumper while being heavily defended and Pierce converted a three-point play with 18 seconds left to seal it.

Brandon Jennings scored 23 points for the similarly short-handed Bucks, who have lost 12 of the last 16.

Grizzlies 104, Mavericks 103

At Dallas, Zach Randolph made a high-arching 17-footer with 0.3 seconds left to lift Memphis over Dallas.

The Grizzlies erased an 18-point deficit shortly before halftime, then polished off the comeback with a wild finish.

Memphis went ahead with 14.3 seconds left when Shane Battier caught a blocked shot under the basket and flicked in a reverse layup. Then Dallas—which had won eight straight and 18 of 19—went back ahead when Dirk Nowitzki made a jumper over Battier from the foul line with 3.1 seconds left.

Knicks 92, Hawks 79

At Atlanta, Amare Stoudemire scored 26 points and Landry Fields added 15 as New York easily beat Atlanta.

Carmelo Anthony, who was poked in the eye in the first quarter and later hit in the head in the first half, finished with 14 points, his lowest total since New York acquired him in a Feb. 22 trade.

Josh Smith scored 17 and Kirk Hinrich added 15 for Atlanta, which has lost two straight and three of four.

Thunder 122, Suns 118, OT

At Oklahoma City, Russell Westbrook had 32 points and 11 assists, and James Harden matched his career high with 26 points as Oklahoma City overcame an off night by NBA scoring leader Kevin Durant to beat Phoenix in overtime.

Vince Carter led Phoenix with 29 points but missed two of three free throws with the chance to put the Suns ahead with 17.4 seconds left. Steve Nash missed a potential tying 3-pointer after that, and the Thunder were able to close it out from the foul line.

Durant made a season-low three baskets on 14 attempts and scored 18 points, 11 of them on free throws.

Reserves Marcin Gortat and Mickael Pietrus each added 20 points for Phoenix. Nash had 11 points and 14 assists, moving past Isiah Thomas for sixth place on the NBA's career assists list.

76ers 125, Warriors 117, OT

At Philadelphia, Andre Iguodala had his second straight triple-double with 15 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists to help Philadelphia beat Golden State in overtime.

Iguodala had 22 points, 13 assists and 10 rebounds Friday in a win over Minnesota. He fed Evan Turner for a dunk late in OT to earn his third triple-double of the season.

Thaddeus Young and Turner each scored 20 points for the Sixers, who moved two games over .500 for the first time this season.

Monta Ellis scored 18 of his 27 points in the fourth quarter to rally the Warriors from an 18-point hole and force overtime. Stephen Curry scored 22 points, and David Lee had 14 points and 14 rebounds.

Pistons 113, Wizards 102

At Auburn Hills, Michigan, Charlie Villanueva scored all of his 16 points in the second quarter to help Detroit build a lead it wouldn't relinquish in a win over Washington.

Villanueva made three 3-pointers, then added a conventional three-point play that started a 10-0 run that put Detroit ahead 60-49 shortly before halftime. Tayshaun Prince, who has been bothered by back problems, added 20 points for the Pistons in his first appearance in five games.

John Wall had 24 points and seven assists for the Wizards.

Howard suspended one game after receiving 16th technical foul

NEW YORK (AP)—Orlando Magic center Dwight Howard has been suspended for one game without pay for picking up his 16th technical foul of the season.

He will serve the suspension Monday when the Magic are home against Portland.

The penalty was announced Saturday by NBA executive Stu Jackson.

Howard leads the NBA in technicals this season. His latest one came with 1:41 left in the first half Friday night against Chicago.

With the Bulls up 43-29, Howard came down with an offensive rebound and was hit on the top of his head by Kyle Korver.

Korver was whistled for a foul but took a swipe at the ball moments after the play. That prompted Howard to swing his elbows. The referee separated the players and also called a technical on Howard.

Rory Sabbatini wins Honda Classic by 1 shot

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla. (AP)—Walking off the second tee Sunday, Rory Sabbatini veered left and stopped, peering toward a patch of 3-foot grass and the lake behind it.

Trouble for the Honda Classic leader? Maybe. Something was rustling in the rough.

"Is that a gator?" Sabbatini said.

The South African was wise to brace himself for any menace on the PGA National course. While no reptile sightings were confirmed, Sabbatini's five-stroke lead shrank to one in the space of seven holes, and a halt in play because of lightning delayed his march toward victory.

He weathered the weather, turned back a late challenge from Y.E. Yang and shot an even-par 70 for a one-stroke win.

"Luckily I had enough of a cushion that I didn't get too concerned," Sabbatini said. "I knew going into today that if I shot even par, it was going to be tough to catch."

He sealed the title with a 2-foot par putt on No. 18 for a 72-hole total of 9-under 271. The resident of Fort Worth, Texas, earned his sixth PGA Tour victory and his first since the 2009 Byron Nelson Championship.

Yang, Honda's 2009 winner, birdied the final hole for a closing 66 to finish 8 under. Jerry Kelly, who played with Sabbatini and Yang in the last threesome, shot a 67 and took third at 7 under.

"Rory did what he had to do to hold us off," Kelly said, "and we just didn't hit it good enough to make enough birdies."

Lee Westwood shot 70-284 and tied for 29th place, meaning Martin Kaymer will remain ranked No. 1. Westwood fell to No. 2 on Feb. 28 and needed a top-three finish to regain the top spot Monday.

Sabbatini is known for his fiery personality, outspoken nature and occasional digs at Tiger Woods, who skipped the event. But Sabbatini's demeanor was even-keel from the time he took the lead to stay on the front nine Saturday.

"I'm a passionate golfer," he said. "I love the game of golf, and I've had my moments. I'm not proud of everything I've done out here, but I'm trying to learn. I'm trying to be a role model for my children, and I know as my wife has said to me, I wouldn't want my son doing some of the things that I've done in the past."

The Sabbatinis have three children ranging in age from 7 years to 5 1/2 months.

Dad started the final round up by five shots, and after No. 8 the lead remained the same. But Yang was within one stroke seven holes later, thanks to birdies on Nos. 12 and 14 and two bogeys by Sabbatini.

Then came treacherous Nos. 15-17, the water-laden stretch known as the Bear Trap. But there would be no collapse by the leader.

In fact, Yang said he was more shaky than Sabbatini down the stretch.

"Usually if you're in front, if you're running away from somebody, you tend to be a bit nervous," the South Korean said through an interpreter. "But in Rory's case, apart from No. 14, he seemed really calm. I commend him for being, I guess, so emotionally stable. I wasn't."

A change in putters before the tournament gave Sabbatini's game a lift, and the new club came through again on No. 16. He sank a 16-foot birdie putt to go back up by two.

Then Sabbatini put his tee shot on the dangerous par-3 17th in the middle of the green. Moments later, a horn signaled a stoppage in play because of lightning in the area.

"It was good for him that he actually put it on the green before the horn went off," Yang said.

The players found refuge in a van as heavy rain fell during a 28-minute delay. But the threat to Sabbatini's lead had passed, and when the round resumed he easily closed out the win.

Sabbatini played the Bear Trap 1 under for the tournament, while the rest of field was 1 over.

"I just really tried to play those holes as smartly as I could and just try to eliminate any opportunity for some big numbers," Sabbatini said. "There's a pretty good reason they call it the Bear Trap, because if it doesn't get you one way, it's going to get you another. It definitely caused some stress for me today."

Scores were lower Sunday because the winds of earlier in the week fell off, but the average round for the tournament was still 2 1/2 strokes above par. Since the beginning of 2010, only last year's U.S. Open at Pebble Beach has had a higher average - 4 over par.

Graeme McDowell shot a 64, matching the lowest score in the event since it moved to PGA National in 2007, and finished 2 under. No. 3-ranked Luke Donald, the 2006 champion, tied for 10th at 1 under, shooting a closing 66.

AP

Rory Sabbatini poses with the trophy after winning the Honda Classic golf tournament in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., Sunday, March 6, 2011.

Players, umpires and MLB hold joint meeting

FORT MYERS, Fla. (AP)—The unions for major league baseball players and umpires have held a rare joint meeting with management.

Sunday's 2 1/2-hour session originally was set at the request of the players' association in early October after a series of missed calls in the playoffs. That meeting was postponed because of a death in the family of one of the participants.

Players' union head Michael Weiner said there was a productive exchange on a range of issues.

Several former players attended the session, including Tony Clark, Steve Rogers, Phil Bradley, Bobby Bonilla, Stan Javier and Rick Helling. Clark is the director of player relations of the players' association.

Bottom line might not be bottom line in NFL talks

By BARRY WILNER
AP PRO FOOTBALL WRITER

With five more days and nights—at least—to reach an agreement, the NFL and the players' union might find money off the top is not the bottom line.

The owners' request that about $2 billion of total revenues be deducted before they split the rest with the players has been a sticking point ever since 2008. That's when the owners opted out of the current collective bargaining agreement, which would have expired last Thursday if not for two extensions.

The deadline now is at the end of Friday, and a compromise on that figure—the owners already deduct about $1 billion for operating expenses from the $9 billion overall take—might be easier than reaching accord on expanding the regular season to 18 games or several other issues.

"We have made player safety our biggest concern, and we won't back off on that," said Tennessee Titans guard and player representative Jake Scott.

"There are so many moving parts, so much that goes on," added Saints tackle Jon Stinchcomb, also a player rep. "When you have these CBA negotiations, what we establish now will affect how we do business for years to come. It's more than just how to slash the pie. It's how you go to work, what your offseason will look like, benefits for former players, how protected are we when injuries come along. There are so many aspects being negotiated, it takes time to come to an agreement on all these different fronts."

One front that could have wiggle room is the owners seeking the additional $1 billion, which they say is essential for league and team operations because of the heavy debt many franchises have for stadium construction loans. Such numbers often are negotiable. Although the players aren't eager to take any sort of paycut, they might be amenable to a substantially reduced giveback that serves the owners well enough.

The rookie wage scale being proposed also shouldn't be too contentious as long as the owners plan to divert much of the money they save toward the veteran players and not their own pockets. All those players who wince when they see an untested rookie getting more guaranteed money than they've earned in their entire careers are firmly behind such a redistribution of those dollars.

Most dicey, as Scott suggests, is anything dealing with player safety and health benefits for current and retired players. That's where the proposed 18 regular-season games and two preseason games figure in.

The union is adamant, with so many injuries in a 16-game schedule—particularly brain trauma and major injuries that can have long-term effects—increasing the length of the regular season is not an option. The owners are just as adamant that the extra revenue 18 games would bring from league media partners and sponsors is necessary to keep the assets growing.

Commissioner Roger Goodell insists the preseason matches don't feature the quality fans deserve, so switching two of them for games that count is preferable.

For the players to agree on 18 games, they would want substantial reductions in offseason workouts, minicamps, and training camp. Should they get that, and if NFLPA executive director DeMaurice Smith can coax, say, five extra roster spots per team (160 more jobs), perhaps the league and union can find common ground in this area, too.

"To me, I feel like we were so far apart," Vikings defensive end Brian Robison said. "But they're trying to keep it out of the courts, which tells me that we're starting to agree on some things. I'm not saying that deal is going to be done real soon, but it's good to see that the guys on both sides are staying in the meeting room and making some progress toward our common goal, which is getting football back on the field when it's supposed to be there."

Packers sign coach to new multiyear deal

GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP)—The Green Bay Packers have signed coach Mike McCarthy to a new multiyear contract less than a month after winning the Super Bowl.

Vice president and general manager Ted Thompson announced the move Friday. Terms were not disclosed.

The 47-year-old McCarthy is headed into his sixth year as head coach and has made the playoffs the past four seasons.

Including the playoffs, McCarthy is 53-34 with Green Bay.

REPEAT

From Page 28

beat Japan's Kazuharu Muto (1:26:34) and teammate Rico Flores (1:28:17). Rounding the Top 6 were Yoshiharu Watanabe (1:30:06), Keam Bae Ji (1:33:27), and Ryuichi Baba (1:33:45).

In the men's age group competition, Saipan's Joel Tudela (1:52:58) and Tom Linden (1:38:20) prevailed in the 15 to 19 and 40 to 49 division, respectively. Toa Takebayahi (1:56:51) ruled the U14 division, Akimasu Suzuki (1:42:29) won in the 20 to 29, Satoshi Wada (1:35:53) reigned in the 30 to 39, Akihisa Otani (1:45:33) dominated the 50 to 59, and Toshio Yamabe (1:37:00) won the over 60 division.

In the women's division, Saipan's Suzy Kindel topped the 50 to 59 age group with a time of 2:06:39. Joining her in the winners circle were Risa Ueno (1:59:19/20 to 29), Saori Seki (2:01:50/ 30 to 39), and Naomi Amai (2:01:30/40 to 49).

The half marathon course had runners leaving AMP and heading north via Beach Road all the way near the post office in Chalan Kanoa before and going back to the starting line.

In the full marathon, the age group winners were Saipan's Donivan Mendiola (5:02:32/15 to 19), Yosuke Furuno (3:19:59/20 to 29), Izuru Nakashima (3:14:54/30 to 39), Kunihito Shioya (3:36:41/40 to 49), Minoru Suzuki (3:17:07/50 to 59), and Noboru Naoi (3:46:52/over 60); and women's division's Misa Seiki (3:53:55/20 to 29), Yoko Tominaga (4:18:14/30 to 39), Eriko Iyama (4:06:47/40 to 49), Yoshie Sato (4:24:51/50 to 59), and Toyoko Tominaga (4:30:08/over 60).

OL'ACES

From Page 28

Sablan stole home after belting a triple, but the BTS-Martha's Store-sponsored Ol'Aces answered with two runs in the bottom frame off an error and an RBI single by Austin Agulto.

The Jets managed a run off a balk in the top of the third, but Ol'Aces got it back off an error in the bottom frame.

Ol'Aces' Mike Muna came in the mound in relief for Jessie Brel to close the final out of the inning. The Jets' Jonathan Villagomez tied the game with a lead off a solo homerun to start the fourth, but Ol'Aces' Peyton Lizama busted a two-RBI triple in the bottom frame that pulled his team ahead 5-3.

The Jets' Ray Saralu and Villagomez tied the game at 5-all in the top of the sixth off a base rip and a sacrifice fly.

K.J. Kalen then put them ahead 6-5 in the top of the eighth with a two-out RBI base knock, but Ol'Aces' Brel drew a walk and stole home to knot up the game 6-6 heading into the last inning of regulation.

After both teams came up empty in the seventh, Ol'Aces held the Jets in the eighth frame. Then Ol'Aces' Kenji Yamagata led off with a hit and scored off a wild pitch for the win.

IT&E Fielders 6, Falcons 2

Last Sunday, IT&E broke the ice with two runs in the bottom of the first inning off an error and a fielder's choice; the Natibu Falcons got a run back off errors to start the second.

Ian Rogolifoi crossed the plate in the bottom of the third inning after getting things started with a triple; Falcons went 1-2-3 in the bottom frame. Then IT&E jumped ahead 6-1 in the top of the fourth. The first four batters reached off a walk, an error, and a pair of RBI singles by Jack Espinoza and Rogolifoi.

The Falcons managed its last run in the top of the sixth, but IT&E's defense buckled down in the end; IT&E defense pulled off four 1-2-3 innings in the game. Winning pitcher, Davin Ada allowed one earned run in six innings off three hits, two bean balls, and four walks with five strikeouts. IT&E's Rogolifoi batted 4-for-4 with an RBI and two runs.

IT&E Fielders 6, Survivors 5

Back on Feb. 27, IT&E took an early 1-0 lead in the first inning off an RBI single by Kai Wanket.

The BTS-Martha's Store Survivors came up empty in the bottom half and IT&E added two more runs off wild pitches in the top of the third. Survivor's Jose Lizama came in for relief for James Kintaro after the damage was done.

The Survivors then got a run back in the bottom frame off an RBI triple by second batter Phillip Sablan, but IT&E went ahead 4-1 in the top of the fifth off an error; Survivors answered with a run allowed off errors in the bottom frame. Notably, Survivors' Jeffrey Lizama came to the mound in relief for Jose Lizama to start the fifth frame.

The Survivors held IT&E in the top of the sixth and pulled ahead 5-4 in the bottom frame.

Esiah Cruz doubled in Kintaro and Jeffrey Lizama scored Jesus Santos. Then Sablan came next and singled him home. IT&E's Cody Kaipat came in relief for Keene Guerrero to get the last out.

IT&E's top of the order rallied in the top of the seventh and reclaimed the lead 6-5 off an RBI single by Wanket and a fielder's choice and went on to close the last three outs. IT&E's Wanket batted 2-for-2 with two RBIs, two runs, two base on balls, and two stolen bases, while Survivors' Jeffrey Lizama batted 3-for-3 with an RBI and two runs in the loss.

BIG LEAGUE

Ol'Aces 8, IT&E Fielders 5

Last Saturday, IT&E took an early 3-0 lead in the first three innings. Mike Tenorio grounded home the first run in the top of the first and stole home later in the third frame; the other run came off a wild pitch in the third inning.

Ol'Aces briefly tied the game in the top of the fourth off an error and a pair of RBI doubles by Keoni Lizama and Rocco Reyes, but IT&E managed a run in the bottom frame off an error to go ahead 4-3.

Ol'Aces then pulled ahead 5-4 in the sixth off a double and a fielder's choice and added three more in the seventh off errors and wild pitches; IT&E only managed one run in its final stand. Ol'Aces' Eli Aughenbaugh batted 2-for-3 with three runs and a base on ball.

SENIOR LEAGUE

Hunters 12, Heats 2

St. Michael's Hunters' Tomas Reyes got things started with an RBI single in the first inning. Then the Hunters managed two more runs off an error and a fielder's choice in the top of the third and pulled ahead 5-0 in the fourth off a base rip by Clayton Aguon; he later stole home.

The Rep. Rafael Demapan Heats managed a run in each of the fourth and fifth frames, but the Hunters broke open the game, 9-2, in the top of the sixth off errors, a fielder's choice, and an RBI triple by Joseph Atalig.

The Heats came up empty in the bottom half and the Hunters piled on four more runs in the seventh off a wild pitch, an error, and a two-RBI single by Atalig and held on to secure the win.

Little League action continues at 6pm tomorrow night at Tan Ko field with a Big League pairing featuring the JC marketing Toothworks Hunters and the Natibu Sports Association Northern Stars.

SHOWDOWN

From Page 28

logged 1:22:20.48, but again was slower in the transition (bike-run) at 41.77 second, allowing Bucher to stay in contention. Bucher posted 1:24:16.56 in the bike leg and after recording only 21.93 seconds in Transition 2, she started the last part of the race less than a minute behind Vanlandingham.

However, Vanlandingham ended the Swiss' hopes of becoming the first ever women's division winner of XTERRA Philippines, as the U.S. pro was faster in the run leg with her 41:17.48. Bucher fell short in the 10K run after clocking in at 43:34.52.

Both Vanlandingham and Bucher are expected to arrive on Saipan today to renew their rivalry in the Crown Jewel of XTERRA Tour this Saturday. Vanlandingham logged 3:07:04 in last year's XTERRA Saipan against Bucher's 2:58:19.

Joining Vanlandingham and Bucher in this Saturday's XTERRA Saipan Championship are Austria's Carina Wasle and United Kingdom's Darrelle Parker and Sam Gardner, who all competed in last weekend's XTERRA Philippines.

The two-time XTERRA Saipan champion Gardner went unchallenged in XTERRA Philippines, winning the men's pro division with a time of 2:25:59.15.

Wasle finished third in the women's division after clocking in at 2:42:03.67, while Parker placed fourth with her 2:53:03.41. Rounding out the Top 5 was U.S. pro Caroline Colonna (3:02:37.14).

3 TEAMS

From Page 28

seven goals. He put Wild Bill's in the scoreboard with a goal in the 44th minute and then made the next five in the second half. Wild Bill's other goal was courtesy of Lar Wongpaya, who found the back of the net with only two minutes gone by in the second half.

Four minutes later in the second half, Detdon scored anew and then he had his third goal in the 65th minute. The Wild Bill's striker had his fourth and fifth goal in a span of six minutes (72nd and 78th) and then logged his last in the 80th minute.

Jun Woo Lee led KFAS's losing cause with his hat trick. Jin Wook Cho lit up the scoreboard first with his goal in the 20th minute. Then Lee followed suit three minutes later, giving KFAS its last taste of the lead, 2-1. Lee added two more goals in the second half, but Detdon answered with five to give Wild Bill's a winning debut.

In the third game, Inter Godfather's drew one goal each from four different players to edge Paire.

David Duenas scored for Inter Godfathers in the 36th minute to tie the game at the break, 1-all. Paire got one goal from Jason Schroeder in the first half.

In the second half, Otsuka Masatoshi made it a 2-1 count with his goal in the 54th minute and 21 minutes later, Gilmark Reusora broke into the scoreboard to up the lead, 3-1.

Paire moved within one, 2-3, off Steve McKagan's goal in the 83rd minute, but Peter Houk scored four minutes later to give Inter Godfather's more cushion.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	46	15	.754	–
New York	32	29	.525	14
Philadelphia	32	30	.516	14 1/2
New Jersey	19	43	.306	27 1/2
Toronto	17	46	.270	30

Southeast Division

Miami	43	20	.683	–
Orlando	40	23	.635	3
Atlanta	37	26	.587	6
Charlotte	26	36	.419	16 1/2
Washington	16	46	.258	26 1/2

Central Division

Chicago	43	18	.705	–
Indiana	27	35	.435	16 1/2
Milwaukee	23	38	.377	20
Detroit	23	41	.359	21 1/2
Cleveland	12	50	.194	31 1/2

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

San Antonio	51	12	.810	–
Dallas	45	17	.726	5 1/2
New Orleans	37	28	.569	15
Memphis	35	29	.547	16 1/2
Houston	32	32	.500	19 1/2

Northwest Division

Oklahoma City	39	22	.639	–
Denver	37	27	.578	3 1/2
Portland	35	27	.565	4 1/2
Utah	33	30	.524	7
Minnesota	15	49	.234	25 1/2

Pacific Division

L.A. Lakers	45	19	.703	–
Phoenix	32	29	.525	11 1/2
Golden State	27	35	.435	17
L.A. Clippers	23	40	.365	21 1/2
Sacramento	15	45	.250	28

Yesterday's Games

Chicago 87, Miami 86
L.A. Lakers 99, San Antonio 83
Detroit 113, Washington 102
Philadelphia 125, Golden State 117, OT
New York 92, Atlanta 79
New Orleans 96, Cleveland 81
Oklahoma City 122, Phoenix 118, OT
Memphis 104, Dallas 103
Boston 89, Milwaukee 83

NBA LEADERS

SCORING

	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Durant, OKC	55	517	430	1560	28.4
James, MIA	59	541	395	1549	26.3
Stoudemire, NYK	58	569	357	1504	25.9
Wade, MIA	57	522	367	1458	25.6
Anthony, NYK	55	482	378	1389	25.3
Bryant, LAL	62	556	359	1554	25.1
Ellis, GOL	60	558	272	1479	24.7
Rose, CHI	58	517	305	1426	24.6
Howard, ORL	60	492	406	1390	23.2
Martin, HOU	61	406	457	1404	23.0
Nowitzki, DAL	51	423	265	1164	22.8
Griffin, LAC	62	535	338	1415	22.8
Aldridge, POR	61	533	287	1356	22.2
Westbrook, OKC	59	439	401	1299	22.0
Bargnani, TOR	54	447	224	1179	21.8
Granger, IND	59	415	283	1234	20.9
Williams, NJN	56	382	317	1171	20.9
Love, MIN	62	418	379	1295	20.9
Randolph, MEM	57	460	224	1150	20.2
Gay, MEM	54	409	194	1069	19.8

FG PERCENTAGE

	FG	FGA	PCT
Hilario, DEN	312	502	.622
Howard, ORL	492	826	.596
A. Johnson, TOR	251	431	.582
Horford, ATL	404	705	.573
Ibaka, OKC	222	401	.554
Young, PHL	323	585	.552
Odom, LAL	357	656	.544
Boozer, CHI	320	600	.533
Millsap, UTA	421	794	.530
Gasol, LAL	441	835	.528

REBOUNDS

	G	OFF	DEF	TOT	AVG
Love, MIN	62	288	675	963	15.5
Howard, ORL	60	239	597	836	13.9
Randolph, MEM	57	271	474	745	13.1
Griffin, LAC	62	225	550	775	12.5
Gasol, LAL	62	211	441	652	10.5
Horford, ATL	57	154	411	565	9.9
Chandler, DAL	57	158	378	536	9.4
Humphries, NJN	60	163	401	564	9.4
Jefferson, UTA	62	163	410	573	9.2
Duncan, SAN	61	145	407	552	9.0

ASSISTS

	G	AST	AVG
Rondo, BOS	48	584	12.2
Nash, PHX	57	645	11.3
Williams, NJN	56	561	10.0
Paul, NOR	63	602	9.6
Calderon, TOR	54	498	9.2
Wall, WAS	48	428	8.9
Felton, DEN	59	519	8.8
Kidd, DAL	60	504	8.4
Westbrook, OKC	59	494	8.4
Rose, CHI	58	476	8.2

HONDA CLASSIC SCORES

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Florida (AP)–Final scores Sunday at the Honda Classic, a $5.7 million PGA Tour event played at the par-70, 7,158-yard PGA National (Champions Course):

FINAL ROUND

Rory Sabbatini (500), $1,026,000	71-64-66-70–271
Y.E. Yang (300), $615,600	68-71-67-66–272
Jerry Kelly (190), $387,600	71-67-68-67–273
Ricky Barnes (135), $273,600	70-68-71-67–276
Tommy Gainey (110), $228,000	71-67-71-68–277
Graeme McDowell (89), $184,538	73-71-70-64–278
Jeff Overton (89), $184,538	69-72-69-68–278
Matt Bettencourt (89), $184,538	70-70-69-69–278
Gary Woodland (89), $184,538	71-68-68-71–278
Luke Donald (68), $136,800	73-68-72-66–279
Hiroyuki Fujita (0), $136,800	72-71-69-67–279
Stuart Appleby (68), $136,800	68-70-72-69–279
Charles Howell III (68), $136,800	71-71-67-70–279
Spencer Levin (56), $102,600	67-72-73-68–280
Hunter Haas (56), $102,600	70-71-71-68–280
Charl Schwartzel (56), $102,600	68-69-74-69–280
Justin Hicks (53), $82,650	73-68-73-67–281
Marc Leishman (53), $82,650	72-72-69-68–281
Justin Leonard (53), $82,650	70-71-70-70–281
Matt Kuchar (53), $82,650	69-70-72-70–281
Robert Allenby (49), $63,840	71-73-71-67–282
Richard S. Johnson (49), $63,840	72-71-72-67–282
Roland Thatcher (49), $63,840	70-73-68-71–282
Sean O'Hair (45), $47,310	70-70-73-70–283
Nathan Green (45), $47,310	73-67-73-70–283
Webb Simpson (45), $47,310	74-67-71-71–283
Kent Jones (45), $47,310	72-71-69-71–283
Kyle Stanley (45), $47,310	68-66-74-75–283
Lee Westwood (0), $35,462	70-69-75-70–284
Ben Curtis (39), $35,462	72-74-70-68–284
Chad Campbell (39), $35,462	74-70-70-70–284
Chris Kirk (39), $35,462	73-70-71-70–284
Fredrik Jacobson (39), $35,462	74-68-71-71–284
Colt Knost (39), $35,462	74-69-70-71–284
Davis Love III (39), $35,462	73-70-69-72–284
John Senden (33), $26,847	70-71-74-70–285
Chris Couch (33), $26,847	70-70-75-70–285
Alex Cejka (33), $26,847	71-74-71-69–285
Carl Pettersson (33), $26,847	70-71-75-69–285
Ian Poulter (33), $26,847	74-71-73-67–285
J.J. Henry (30), $22,800	71-70-74-71–286
William McGirt (30), $22,800	75-70-72-69–286
Cameron Tringale (25), $17,357	71-70-74-72–287
Kenny Perry (25), $17,357	71-72-73-71–287
Greg Chalmers (25), $17,357	68-72-76-71–287
Josh Broadaway (0), $17,357	78-68-68-73–287
Jimmy Walker (25), $17,357	74-67-72-74–287
Blake Adams (25), $17,357	73-73-72-69–287
Henrik Stenson (25), $17,357	74-70-76-67–287
D.A. Points (25), $17,357	74-72-76-65–287
Jason Dufner (19), $13,595	75-67-72-74–288
Edoardo Molinari (0), $13,595	73-73-72-70–288
Stephen Ames (19), $13,595	73-72-74-69–288
Scott Gutschewski (19), $13,595	73-70-69-76–288
Brian Gay (15), $12,996	74-70-72-73–289
Paul Goydos (15), $12,996	73-72-72-72–289
Nick Price (15), $12,996	70-74-73-72–289
Shaun Micheel (11), $12,540	74-71-72-73–290
Vaughn Taylor (11), $12,540	71-75-72-72–290
Alex Prugh (11), $12,540	74-71-74-71–290
Andres Romero (11), $12,540	72-74-75-69–290
Marc Turnesa (11), $12,540	75-71-76-68–290
Kevin Streelman (7), $12,027	73-71-74-73–291
Chris Stroud (7), $12,027	73-69-77-72–291
Brendan Steele (7), $12,027	74-71-76-70–291
David Duval (7), $12,027	74-71-77-69–291
Chad Collins (4), $11,685	74-72-72-74–292
Jeff Maggert (4), $11,685	75-70-76-71–292
David Mathis (2), $11,514	71-72-75-77–295
Rory McIlroy (0), $11,286	73-71-77-75–296
Jhonattan Vegas (1), $11,286	76-70-77-73–296
Ernie Els (1), $11,286	75-71-78-72–296
Trevor Immelman (1), $11,001	74-71-77-76–298
Steve Flesch (1), $11,001	73-73-78-74–298
Josh Teater (1), $10,830	75-70-79-75–299
J.P. Hayes (1), $10,716	76-69-77-79–301
Louis Oosthuizen	75-70-75-WD

FedEx Cup points in parentheses

Fly High leads Rocball Final Four cast

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Jason Limes, seen here leaping for a kee in a file photo, plays for Krowners, who advanced to the semifinals of the high school Rocball league at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Fly High and three others made it to the semifinals of the 2011 Rocball High School Spring League after last week's games at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

Fly High clinched the first semis ticket after a 48-34 victory over Watch Ur Face last Friday. The win was fifth in as many games for Fly High, while Watch Ur Face bowed out of the competition with a dismal 1-4 record in the round-robin regular season

Ryan Ichihara led Fly High's sweep with his 11 points off two kees, one xunk, one ace, and one goal.

Joining Fly High in the semifinals were Kingz, Krowners, and the Chiefs.

The Kingz also played last Friday and juiced out Krowners in three sets, 33-26. The victory put the Kingz in second place in the team standings with its 4-1 slate.

Despite the loss, Krowners still advanced to the next round, as their 3-2 record was enough for a share of third place with the Chiefs. Jason Limes led Krowners' losing cause with his nine points off two aces, one kee, and one goal.

The Chiefs saved their season after surviving the Underdogs, 32-31. The Chiefs lost the first two sets, 15-14, 15-8, to fall behind, 22-30. In the third set, the Chiefs must win by nine point to steal the game and they succeeded, 10-1, to foil the Underdogs' upset bid.

In Rocball, a win can only be awarded to the team that prevails in the last set and has the lead. If the leading team loses the last set, the game goes into overtime with the trailing squad needing to win two sets and the former prevailing in only one set.

With the win, the Chiefs were given the No. 3 seeding in the semifinals and are scheduled to play the second-ranked Kingz in Game 1 of their best-of-three series today. The other semis pairing are No. 1 seed Fly High and fourth-ranked Krowners, who played Game 1 of their own semis series yesterday. Winners of the semifinals series will advance to the best-of-five title affair.

Brewers down Masters, 14-11

By WALTER CEPEDA-SUTHERLAND
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REPORTER

WALTER CEPEDA-SUTHERLAND

Brewers' Byron Kaipat batted 4-for-6 with five RBIs, three runs, and a stolen base in last Friday's Saipan Major League matchup against the Masters at Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Ballfield.

The Brewers stamped out the Masters with a six-run string in the top of the ninth inning to prevail, 14-11, in last Friday's Saipan Major League matchup at Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Ballfield.

The Brewers improved its win-loss card to 2-1, while the Masters fell to a 1-2 slate.

The Brewers took an early 3-0 lead in the top of the first off an RBI single by Byron Kaipat and a two-RBI base knock by Manny Sablan, but the Masters managed to get a couple of runs back in the bottom frame off an error and a passed ball.

Then after three scoreless innings the Brewers jumped ahead 7-2 in the top of the fifth off a double by Mike Pangelinan and RBI singles by Kaipat, Harry Nakamura, and Kevin Kapileo.

The Masters managed a run in the bottom of the sixth off a base rip by Harlan Reyes and went on to tie the game at 7-all in the bottom of the seventh off a two-RBI single by Jess Mesa and a two-RBI double by Nick Guerrero.

Then the Brewers' Kaipat singled home Mike Taitano who busted a one-out triple in the top of the eighth. The Masters failed to answer in the bottom frame and the Brewers poured on six more runs to start the ninth. John Taitano, Toi Celis, and Nakamura all belted RBI singles, Kapiat a two-RBI base rip and Sablan stole home. In the end, the Masters managed four runs in its final stand but could not ignite a late rally.

Brewers' Kaipat batted 4-for-6 with five RBIs, three runs, and a stolen base.

SML action continues at 6:30pm tonight at Tan Ko Field with the Masters looking to bounce back against the D-9ers.

Red Eye, V-Power top foes in men's

» Enamo Meta beats T&C Clan in women's

By WALTER CEPEDA-SUTHERLAND
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REPORTER

Red Eye and V-Power reigned supreme in last Friday's Chamolinian Softball Association 2nd Annual Budweiser Slow-Pitch Softball League men's division, while Enamo Meta routed T&C Clan in women's play at the Capitol Hill Ballfield.

Red Eye topped Braddahs, 12-10, in the first game, while V-Power routed Calikano Groupers, 18-8, in the nightcap.

Red Eye 12, Braddahs 10

Braddahs' Jose Iguel and Red Eye's Jack Sablan both blasted two-run homers in the first inning.

Braddahs' John Iguel then jacked a three-run shot in the top of the third, but Red Eye got two runs back in the bottom frame off a fielder's choice and an RBI single by Tyrone Omar.

Both teams went 1-2-3 in the fourth and Braddahs took a brief 9-4 lead in the top of the fifth off a couple of solo shots by Nunu Kapileo and Isaiah Falig and a two-run blast by Austin Iguel.

Red Eye then tied the game in the bottom half off RBI singles by Omar and Luis Arriola and a three-run bomb by Jack Sablan.

Braddahs managed a run off a fielder's choice at the start of the sixth, but Red Eye answered with three runs in the bottom frame off two hits, a fielder's choice, and some costly errors. Red Eye then went on to close the last three outs in four batters.

Red Eye improved its win-loss card to 2-3 and is tied in the standings with Groupers. Braddahs is still looking for its first win after four tries.

Enamo Meta 10, T&C Clan 0

Enamo Meta took a 4-0 lead in the bottom of the second inning off an error and three freebie walks with the bases loaded.

T&C Clan came up empty to start the third and Enamo added two more runs off errors in the bottom frame.

T&C finally reached second base briefly in the fourth inning, but were snubbed and gave up another pair of runs to Enamo off an error and a fielder's choice in the bottom frame. After T&C got shut down again in the top of the fifth, Enamo managed the two runs it needed to secure a run-rule decision off errors.

Enamo Meta improved to 3-1 and is comfortably in second behind league-leading Sakudi (4-0), while T&C Clan is still winless in four games.

V-Power 18, Calikano Groupers 8

V-Power broke the ice with four runs in the top of the first inning off a couple of errors and a two-run homer by J.P. Sablan.

Calikano Groupers answered and tied the game at 4-all in the bottom frame off an error, a base rip by Ton Pangelinan, and a two-run shot by Navan Falig.

V-Power kept it going with a three-run blast by Mel Sakisat in the top of the second, but Groupers got two runs back in the bottom frame off a two-RBI single by Darren Pua.

V-Power then kicked it in gear at the start of the third and shot ahead 12-6.

John Acosta and Ron Benavente each drilled solo shots and two outs and two base hits later, E.J. Tenorio stepped in and delivered a three-run homer. Groupers left the bases loaded in the bottom half, but kept V-Power at bay for the next two innings.

Groupers' Falig busted another two-run homer in the bottom of the fifth, but V-Power came through in the top of the sixth and added six runs to its lead off a fielder's choice, a couple of errors, an RBI single by George David, and a two-RBI double by Eric Tenorio. V-Power went on to close the last inning in 1-2-3 fashion. V-Power's E.J. Tenorio batted 3-for-3 with three-RBIs and two runs; his teammate Sakisat batted 2-for-3 with three RBIs and two runs.

The win was the fourth in five games for V-Power and the team is safely positioned in third place behind undefeated Natibu (5-0) and Phat Boyz (4-0).

Softball action continues tomorrow night with a men's division tripleheader at Capitol Hill Ballfield starting at 6:30pm when team Familia (0-5) meets Braddahs.

Then at 7:30pm Natibu takes on Your Balls (2-1) followed by the G-Ballers (2-2) against Gorlillaz (1-3) at 8:30pm.

Cruz takes SGA February Ace

John "Nani" Cruz bested 22 other Saipan Golfers Association members in the SGA February Ace Tournament held on Feb. 27 at the Marianas Country Club.

Cruz shot a net score of 71 for a two-shot lead over eventual runner-up Bob Magofna (net 73). Completing the Top 3 was Ray San Nicolas, who carded a net 74. Besides taking the SGA February Ace, Cruz also gained a slot to the year-end Ace of the Aces Tournament, joining first qualifier and January Ace winner Tony Deleon Guerrero.

Other SGA members who competed in the February tournament—with their net scores in parenthesis—were Patrick Guerrero (75) Joe Demapan (76), Manny Blas (76.5), Jung Eun Teack (77), Nick Sablan (77), Larry Hocog (77), Tony Deleon Guerrero (79), Ed Manibusan (79), Manny Sablan (79), Ray Salas (80), Norbert Sablan (81), Joe Sablan (82), Joe Deleon Guerrero (83), Martin Sablan (84), Frances Sablan (84), Art and Larry Deleon Guerrero (85), Ben Aldan (86), Ed Sablan (86), Mariano Fajardo (88), and Steve Balakrishna (94).

Balakrishna and Nick Sablan won the longest drive contests on holes No. 11 and 2, respectively, while closest to the pin winners include Cruz (No. 6), Patrick Guerrero (No. 8), Magofna (No. 12), and Frances Sablan (No. 16).

Bob Magofna and Ed Manibusan had two birdies each, while Nick Sablan, Nicolas, Blas, and Larry Hocog made one apiece. ***(Roselyn B. Monroyo)***

Brewers down Masters, 14-11

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Saipan Tribune
Sports

Lakers rout NBA-best Spurs for 7th straight win

PAGE 24

Repeat winners in 10K, half marathon

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Saipan's Noriko Jim completed a three-peat in the 10K race on Saturday morning.

Jim cruised to her third straight 10K win after topping the women's field with a time of 43 minutes and 43 seconds. The 40-year-old long runner prevailed over fellow Saipan bet Akiko Miller, who crossed the finished line with his baby boy in a stroller at the 48:27 mark. Rounding out the Top 6 were Japan's Kazuyo Itagaki (48:40) and Emiko Ueno (49:27) and the CNMI's Saihong Wang (51:32) and Sakiko Eda (51:39).

The 10K race started at the American Memorial Park with runners heading south through Beach Road before making a turn near Hakubotan and returning to AMP.

In the men's division, Japan's Takasahi Aoyama posted the fastest time at 36:36 for back-to-back wins in the shortest race of the day. Guam's Toby Castro finished second with 37:15, followed by Japan's Tsubasa Ito (37:23), Hiroshi Seino (40:33), Mitsuru Kimura (41:56), and Guam's Jorgene Abalos (42:52).

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Saipan's Noriko Jim is a few steps away from cutting the tape at the finish line of the 10K race in last Saturday's 2011 Saipan Marathon.

In the age group divisions, ruling their respective categories were Canatsu Kaga (1:03:31/U14); Saipan's Lia Rangamar (59:27/15 to 19); Nozomi Iwama (56:26/20 to 29); Chiharu Sato (53:43 (30 to 39); Jennifer Hreljac (57:35/40 to 49), Kyoko Matsuda (53:02/50 to 59); and Kyoko Inagaki (59:55/over 60).

The men's age group winners were Haruka Oshida (52:21/U14); Ittetsu Shioya (44:35/15 to 19); Junjie Cui (43:36/20 to 29); Takao Yonekura (45:25/30 to 39); Saipan's Yoshi Suzuki (45:23/40 to 49); Saipan's Cesar Danao (43:19/50 59); Sakae Sato (45:21/over 60).

In the half marathon, Amber Sarkkinen clinched her second straight win after completing the second longest race of the day in 1:43:57. The 25-year-old, who ruled the 20 to 29 age group of the race last year, was the top finisher in the women's open division and crushed her 2010 winning time of 1:45:57.

Sarkkinen was the lone CNMI runner to break into the Top 6 in the women's division. Japan's Sayuri Yuyuma finished second with a time of 1:45:33, followed by compatriots Kazumi Suzuki (1:53:17), Nami Okamoto (1:54:46), Mariko Ueda (1:57:39), and Akiko Sasaki (1:58:52).

In the men's division, Guam's Michael Gaitan topped the field with a time of 1:20:18. The 18-year-old runner

See REPEAT on Page 26

Bucher

Vanlandingham

Vanlandingham-Bucher showdown looms

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Defending XTERRA Saipan champion Renata Bucher and 2010 XTERRA World winner Shonny Vanlandingham seem to be headed for a neck-and-neck race in the 2011 XTERRA Saipan Championship after their close battle in the inaugural XTERRA Philippines last weekend.

Vanlandingham ruled the women's division of Sunday's XTERRA Philippines, timing in at 2:31:39.19, less than two minutes ahead of runner-up Bucher, who completed the race in the southern part of the Philippines in 2:33:35.00.

The U.S. pro Vanlandingham, who placed second to Bucher in last year's XTERRA Saipan, timed in at 26:23.21 in the 1.5-kilometer swim in the Camotes Sea in Liloan, Cebu, but ate up 56 seconds in the swim-bike transition. Bucher submitted 24:34.03 in the swim race and was faster than the U.S pro in the swim-bike transition with her 48.39 seconds.

In the 32-kilometer mountain bike race, the XTERRA World champion

See SHOWDOWN on Page 26

JUNIOR LEAGUE

Ol'Aces hold off Jets, 7-6

By WALTER CEPEDA-SUTHERLAND
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REPORTER

Ol'Aces needed extra innings to beat the Jets, 7-6, in their Junior League matchup as the 2011 season of the Saipan Little League continued over the weekend at Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Ballfield.

Also leaving the Oleai Sports Complex triumphant were the Junior League's IT&E Fielders, the Big League's Rep. Ramon S. Basa-Randy Fenner Ol'Aces, and the Senior League's St. Michael's Hunters.

JUNIOR LEAGUE

Ol'Aces 7, Jets 6

Last Saturday, Saipan Shipping-Pacific Amusement Jets broke the ice in the second inning when Nathan

See OL'ACES on Page 26

A Jets player takes a cut in last Saturday's Junior League matchup against the Ol'Aces at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Ballfield.

WALTER CEPEDA-SUTHERLAND

3 teams win debuts in men's league

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

MP United Blue and Wild Bill's had rousing debuts, while Inter Godfather's pulled off a close win, as the 2011 NMIFA Men's Invitational Football League kicked off last Sunday at the Oleai Sports Complex Field.

MP United Blue shut out Independents-Ol'Aces in the first game, 5-0; Wild Bill's downed Korean Football Association on Saipan in the second tiff 7-4; and Inter Godfather's defeated Paire Football Club in the last match of the day, 4-2.

Four goals in the first half, one from Paul Yoon, gave MP United control of the game, and they never looked back, as IFC-Ol'Aces seemed to be off in their first match of the season.

In the second match in the opening week of the men's league Adul Detdon was on target, hitting six of Wild Bill's

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